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The Suffragent

A Social Satire

An Original Play in Three Acts

BY

EDWARD STAATS DE GROTE TOMPKINS

Author of

"Through David's Realm," An Honest Hypocrite," Etc.

BOSTON.

by the Blanchard Printing Co.

1910

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INTRODUCTION.

It has seemed to the author that a problem play might be written without the gloom of an Ibsen or the iconoclasm of a Shaw. But preachers have almost universally concluded that lessons must be taught by disagreeable methods. Since preaching by such means has almost entirely failed of result is it not fair to assume that something might be accomplished through joy and pleasure rather than by depression and unhappiness. In short the aim of the present effort is to show by an agreeable method that the theme "Fad versus Human Nature" can be illustrated, and just conclusions drawn, without violating either the laws of propriety or the general desire for pleasure. In fact the human being naturally craves the light, and also the lighter forms and lighter methods of instruction. If satire is gently used it can easily impress its lessons on humanity.

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

JOHN MANNERS, who is manly and believes in people being what they are.

HARRY MCMAYNE, a nice young fellow who likes a pretty girl, but does not despise money.

ETHELBERTA DONNE, Who is manly and believes in people being what they are.

THE REVEREND DR. GIBBONS, President of the E. S. L. Capable yet not unmindful of glory.

MRS. STUYVESANT VAN RENSSELAER KRUGER-JONES, a social light.

MISS EARNEST, a lady severe in morals, mind and speech.

ANNETTE SILVERTON, young, fond and foolish.

MISS TATTEL, good, but interested in others.

MRS. VOISINE, a lady who is willing to do odd jobs.

ACT I.

Mrs. Kruger-Jones' Drawing Room.

ACT II.

John Manners' Office, next morning.

ACT III.

Committee Room in Convention Hall, next day.

THE SUFFRAGENT

ACT I.

SCENE.—MRS. KRUGER-JONES' *drawing room. A table laid for tea. Hot water urn simmering. Enter* ANNETTE. *She hastily looks the table over and adjusts things. Sits down at table, sighs.*

Annette. Oh! dear! I'm in such a pickle. In love with two men! Oh! oh! oh! (*Enter* HARRY.)

Harry. Hello! sweetheart! Didn't expect to see yours truly.

Annette. Hello; dear. I did, I'm always let in.

Harry. By jove this is a fine job. Here I've been looking for one for months and now I've got it. Who'd ever think it? Poor but worthy young man. Young man in love with one girl, and trying to marry another. Petted by a rich, but elderly female and thrown on the cold charities of a cold world. My, though, isn't it chilly?

Annette. Yes, very. You'll give me a cold if you keep on.

Harry. Oh! Annette, oh! Bert, oh! Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Kruger-Jones.

Annette. Mrs Kruger-Jones. (*Solemnly.*)

Harry. But I must explain my position. I mean my job.

Annette. Your position! Yes, do.

Harry. It isn't every man with a position who has a job.

Annette. My intellect is feeble, but I can grasp that.

Harry. But I have both. You say lucky man. Perhaps, but it is such a peculiar position, and such a ridiculous job. My position is just this. Owing to the exceeding kindness of Mrs. Jones, I mean Mrs. Kruger-Jones——

Annette. Mrs. Kruger-Jones!

Harry. I am bound to heed her slightest whim. She is very fond of young men. Now why are old cats so fond of kittens?

Annette. I don't know. It isn't always reciprocated.

Harry. But what I can't understand is, when they are fond of them, why do they always want to marry them off to some one else?

Annette. It may be spite. You never can tell.

Harry. Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Kruger-Jones——

Annette. (*Solemnly.*) Mrs. Kruger-Jones!

Harry. Is not so old herself. Nice place, bully style. I could be happy here. (*Sighs.*)

Annette. I, too, could be happy here. (*Sighs.*)

Harry. We two, you mean, could be happy here. (*Both sigh.*) Bert is a fine girl and she has the cash.

Annette. John is a fine man and he has the cash.

Harry. Annette, I love you.

Annette. Oh! dear, yes, I know that. But you have got to devote yourself to the Cause, big C, and don't you forget it.

Harry. I know, I am here at a woman's rights meeting simply because I am poor. The women can suffer if they want to.

Annette. We do, Oh! Harry we do. But we suffer more without money than with. (*Both sigh.*)

Harry. Well, if we can't get married we will suffer together. I'm to be the only man here. Pshaw! I forgot, I am not here in the capacity of a suffragette. I am merely a gentlemanly usher, just an usher. (*Enter* MRS. JONES.)

Mrs. Jones. All alone, Harry, with Annette?

Harry. The old cats have not arrived.

Mrs. Jones. Now Harry, you must not talk like that. Ethelberta is not an old cat.

Harry. Oh! she's a trump. But how she does rag out!

Mrs. Jones. Yes, she is a bit manly, I must say. But, HARRY, she is just the girl for you. I would so love to see you marry her.

Harry. So would I. But marriage I suspect has not even entered her mind.

Mrs. Jones. Put the idea there. No one has a better chance. She is fancy free. Lots of nice young girls marry foolish young men. I did myself.

Harry. Yes, but he had money. I am poor, too deucedly

poor even to think about. What can I offer a nice girl? I have not even a heart.

Mrs. Jones. (*Smirking.*) Come Harry. Come now, no more of that nonsense. (ANNETTE *giggles.*)

Harry. All right. (*With a sigh and a wink at* ANNETTE.) I'll be a man.

Mrs. Jones. Yes, Harry, you must. You know old age must respect itself. (ANNETTE *waves her hand at* HARRY.)

Harry. Huh! (*With a grimace.*)

Mrs. Jones. Now it was very good of you to come this afternoon. It will give the affair such an air of——

Harry. Respectability you mean.

Mrs. Jones. No I don't, you silly boy, quite the contrary, in some people's eyes. (*Jestingly.*)

Harry. Who's eyes?

Mrs. Jones. Oh! the old cats you were speaking of. I meant it would relieve the affair of being a hen party.

Harry. With one rooster. I don't see that that helps it very much.

Mrs. Jones. But there won't be one rooster. Mr. Manners is coming.

Harry. Mr. Manners is coming, Mr. Manners is coming. He is coming. Let me think. Do you mean that John Manners is coming to your hen party? (ANNETTE *clasps her hands.*)

Mrs. Jones. I don't know about the hen party. You rather intimated it would be a cat party.

Harry. John Manners, the calm, dignified proper——

Mrs. Jones. Proper, did you say? (*Surprised.*)

Harry. Yes, proper. If you could know how utterly shocked I am you would know something was improper. How is he going to dress? How shall I put it in the paper? Shall it be in low neck and short sleeves, in black satin and point lace or plain street costume. I must know so as to get it right in the morning paper.

Mrs. Jones. You needn't bother about that. I have that all fixed. The reporter just left.

Harry. Good heavens! madam, and did you put me in, in

any such appropriate but ridiculous garb? John Manners! Ye gods and little fishes!

Mrs. Jones. No, I just said my dear friend, Mr. McMayne, had consented to act as usher, and with that grace with which he leads the cotillion was enabled to make the affair pass off as a social function.

Harry. Good God! When I am just a butler.

Mrs. Jones. Don't be silly. It was nasty of Hodges to act as he did. I thought English servants had no principles.

Harry. Well, you found out. (*Enter* MISS EARNEST.)

Mrs. Jones. Delighted to see you, Miss Earnest. You know Mr. McMayne. He has so kindly offered to help us out and brighten up our little company. I leave you to him. (*Exit.*)

Harry. My dear Miss Earnest, you see the hole I'm in.

Miss Earnest. Hole! This drawing room a hole. Why it is the handsomest room in town.

Harry. I don't mean this ranch——

Miss Earnest. Ranch indeed! Mr. McMayne I do not understand you.

Harry. Oh! now come, don't be hard on a fellow. I mean the situation—eh—the fix I am in.

Miss Earnest. I see nothing of the sort. You don't look in the least like one in a fix. You look rather happy and contented. Indeed if I may speak my mind——

Harry. You may. (*Aside.*) She always has. (*To* ANNETTE.)

Miss Earnest. I think something a little more serious would be becoming.

Harry. Serious. Ye gods and little fishes. If this isn't something serious I'd like to know what is.

Miss Earnest. There, young man, you are right. It is serious. It is one of the great moments of the age.

Harry. Yes, yes, I knew.

Miss Earnest. Now don't interrupt me. In interrupting me you may be destroying the influence which all ages made possible. You cannot tell if the few words I say to you now, into your heedless ear——

Harry. My ear is all right, only I am not deaf.

Miss Earnest. Who said you were deaf?

Harry. But you were making remarks about my ear.

Miss Earnest. Your ear! (*In contempt.*) Your ear! Young man can you not see that life holds something earnest——

Harry. Rather—just now. (*To* ANNETTE.)

Miss Earnest. But you are frivolous. You are not suited to the times, to the vast expansion of the human mind which is opening out wide and upward tending to the development of the human race, until we shall be no longer in the bondage of sin, that is, in the bondage of man——

Harry. I say, I think you are getting a little rough on us. We aren't so awfully bad, don't yer know!

Miss Earnest. But it is this frivolity, this unheeding——

Harry. Ear, yes, I know. But there are other ears than mine. Go out into the waste places of the earth and tell them. Don't pitch on a poor fellow like me who has to earn his living.

Miss Earnest. You a man, talk of earning your living. You should earn your living. You should make yourself the bright and shining star that should lead the cause to victory.

Harry. What cause? There are such a lot.

Miss Earnest. Why, *the* cause. The only cause that is now before the world, the cause——

Harry. Say, do you know I am awfully mixed. I want to do my duty and somehow your words give me a tremendous inspiration but I don't know what for.

Miss Earnest. You here, here today and you tell me you don't know what you are here for?

Harry. Yes I know what I am here for. Do you know what you are here for?

Miss Earnest. Here for! Why I am here to bear witness to the eternal truth, which is written in our very flesh, which throbs in our veins, which actuates and moves our entire being, the thing which will do more to elevate and enlighten——

Harry. But to come down to earth. What is it anyway?

Miss Earnest. What is it anyway! You tell me that, you in this sanctuary devoted (*he looks around*) devoted to

the furtherance of the greatest cause on earth. Now tell me why do you ask such questions when you yourself are here?

Harry. I? Oh! I know very well why I am here.

Miss Earnest. Well tell me then. Tell me in clear, concise words. Tell me from your heart. Tell me with your brain most clear, and your tongue most strong.

Harry. Here? Well, I am here as a butler.

Miss Earnest. As a butler!

Harry. Yes, didn't you know.

Miss Earnest. No. I didn't. (*Enter* MISS TATTEL.)

Harry. By Jove, I must brace, or the social function will look like a cocked hat. How do you do, Miss Tattel? (*Shakes hands.*) You know Miss Earnest?

Miss Earnest. Shoulder to shoulder Miss Tattel and I have stood through long hours of anxiety and anguish, looking through the darkness to see some glimmer of the dawn——

Harry. If I may suggest Miss Earnest, late hours are very bad for any cause. You lose your grip, you know.

Miss Tattel. Oh! but, dear Mr. McMayne, you know my dear friend is only figurative. But do tell me how you came to be here, I would so like to know.

Harry. I was just telling Miss Earnest when you arrived.

Miss Earnest. Yes he was going to put to me from his standpoint, a standpoint which perhaps a man can best understand, and one which would perhaps my dear Susan enable us to see clearer and deeper into the vast problem we have before us.

Miss Tattel. Oh! I am so interested.

Miss Earnest. He says he is here as a butler.

Miss Tattel. As a butler?

Harry. Yes, as a butler. You see it is like this, Hodge is an Englishman.

Miss Tattel. And pray who is Hodge?

Harry. Oh! Hodge or 'Odge as he calls himself is Mrs. Jones, I mean Mrs. Kruger-Jones' butler, and when he heard she was to give a reception for the E. S. L. he came out quite flat-footed and said "'E 'adn't hany huse fer sich damned nonsense."

Miss Earnest. How awful!

Miss Tattel. Awful, such language! And Mrs. Jones dismissed him at once?

Harry. No she didn't. She just sent for me. What do you think of me?

Miss Earnest. And you don't believe in woman suffrage?

Harry. Oh! yes I do. It pays. It gives me a job. See?

Miss Earnest. You wretched boy! To jest at so serious an occasion. (*Exit* HARRY.) Is it not awful to what depths we sometimes sink. I was really hoping we might have succeeded in getting one man in the fold. It is so strange we have to fight the battle all alone.

Miss Tattel. Cheer up sister. There is much in life yet. It is very interesting to see and watch humanity. Now this young man may be won from the error of his ways.

Miss Earnest. From the error of his frivolous ways! He is too sordid to care for ought but himself. He accepts Mrs. Jones' kindness and then mocks her noble efforts.

Miss Tattel. Do you think she is very fond of him?

Miss Earnest. She makes him her servant.

Miss Tattel. Yes, so I see. But do you think——

Miss Earnest. Think! I don't think, I know.

Miss Tattel. Oh! do you? (*Significantly.*)

Miss Earnest. (*Not heeding.*) I know the world is all too gay, all too insincere, all too selfish. I know few there are who are willing to leave its follies and work for the welfare of humanity. I know——. (*Enter* HARRY.)

Harry. Step right this way. (*Enter* MRS. VOISINE.) Let me present you, Miss Earnest, Miss Tattel. Yes I know you know, so just tell Mrs. Voisine all about it. First, that I am the new improvised butler, and give her all the instructions about the higher life and so forth. Mrs. Voisine confided to me that she was crazy about it as we were coming in. (*Exit.*)

Miss Earnest. The saucy boy!

Mrs. Voisine. Yes. I would so like to know all about it. Do tell me.

Miss Earnest. We are very glad to see you. We welcome all who can help.

Mrs. Voisine. And I can do so little.

Miss Earnest. But we all count, if not in genius at least by force of numbers.

Mrs. Voisine. I hear you take such a noble stand.

Miss Earnest. We try to do so. But in these days there seems little good we can do without our rights. Once give us these and then——

Miss Tattel. But perhaps Mrs. Voisine knows something about the people we are going to meet today.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! no. I am a stranger. I only know we are to meet that great and good woman, our worthy president, is it not so?

Miss Earnest. Yes indeed, that noble woman whose life is a beacon light——

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! yes. (*Rapturously.*)

Miss Earnest. Who is willing to tread the pathway strewn with stones——

Mrs. Voisine. How lovely!

Miss Earnest. Climbing on, ever climbing on, on and upward——. (*Enter* HARRY.)

Harry. (*In great awe.*) Hush! she's coming.

Miss Earnest. Who's coming? Climbing on——

Harry. (*Impressively.*) Sh', sh!

Miss Earnest. Climbing——. (*Enter* DR. GIBBONS *escorted by* MRS. JONES *in great eclat.*)

Mrs. Jones. I have the great honor and distinction of introducing our beloved president. (*She is presented to each in turn.*) Miss Earnest an eloquent and soulful leader, Miss Tattel our genial and helpful friend, Mrs. Voisine a new, but very ardent acquisition. Mr. McMayne, a friend of mine, who does me the honor of acting as master of ceremonies at this auspicious occasion.

Harry. Very glad to meet you Madam. The fact is the butler won't buttle.

Dr. Gibbons. Won't buttle?

Harry. Nope. He says——

Mrs. Jones. Harry!

Miss Earnest. Mr. McMayne!

Miss Tattel. Oh! please!

Harry. Well he won't. That is all there is about it. He says "'e won't 'ave h'any thing to do with such ha——"

Mrs. Jones. Harry!

Harry. You see Madam he does not approve of women having rights. "'E never buttled for sich people hand 'e won't now."

Mrs. Jones. Dear Dr. Gibbons, I must explain. My butler is so set against our movement that I can do nothing with him. He simply refuses to serve.

Dr. Gibbons. How very interesting!

Mrs. Jones. How very disgusting! We are not even allowed to ask for our rights, and our very servants think themselves our superiors.

Dr. Gibbons. But surely you have dismissed him?

Mrs. Jones. Oh! no. I don't dare. I should never get another; at least not an English one.

Miss Earnest. But your duty to the sacred cause of right should surely compel you to take the high hand and——

Harry. That's all right, Miss Earnest, but you see we are not all so far above the little needs of ordinary life that we can dispense with a good butler.

Mrs. Jones. Yes, Harry, you are right. I really couldn't get on without Hodge. I couldn't, I know I couldn't.

Dr. Gibbons. Yes, my dear, I understand. We must use common means to attain great ends.

Mrs. Voisine and Miss Tattel. How beautiful!

Harry. And you see ladies you really can't have a function——

Miss Earnest. What is a function?

Harry. I don't know, I'm sure. A function is something where you have clothes on——

Miss Earnest. Clothes on! Well I should——

Harry. Yes, of course, and you eat——

Miss Earnest. And you talk this way, when thousands of souls are starving, souls——

Harry. I was just saying you eat, you know, and have a butler, or—or—me. That makes a function.

Dr. Gibbons. You naughty boy. You take your position too seriously. (*Tapping him on the shoulder. Exit* HARRY.)

Nice boy, a friend or a relative? (*A little inquisitively.*)

Mrs. Jones. Just a dear friend. (*A little sentimentally.*) (*Miss Tattel looks at Mrs. Voisine who smiles sweetly.*) And dear Dr. Gibbons I have another dear friend I want to introduce to you.

Dr. Gibbons. A man? (*Somewhat eagerly.*)

Mrs. Jones. Oh! no, not this time. We cannot get very many male suffragettes, at least not yet. This one is however almost as good as a man.

Miss Earnest. You don't mean to say Mrs. Jones that any woman is almost as good as a man. Why I, in the eternal fitness of things, when the star of——

Mrs. Jones. (*Sweetly.*) Yes, I call her a star, perhaps because she isn't a man, and because she is still a woman with all a man's value.

Miss Earnest. Yes, I know. Dr. Gibbons she is mannish it is true and the divine——

Mrs. Jones. (*With a smile.*) Yes, thank you, the divine mission seems given to her, for she not only lives and acts like a man, she carries out her principles by being to all intents and purposes one, since she has studied law, qualified herself to practice, and put out her shingle, and devotes herself to righting the wrongs of the poor, who cannot afford to employ a lawyer. She is very independent and denies the claims of womanhood, scoffs at feminine duty, actually sniffs at babies——

Dr. Gibbons. Indeed, she must be a character. Why is she so averse to babies?

Mrs. Jones. She claims every person has the right to be what they wish to be, to make their lives whatsoever they please, bound down by no trammels——

Dr. Gibbons. And does she entirely ignore the question of love and marriage?

Mrs. Jones. She sneers at love as an imbecility of weak minds——

Dr. Gibbons. She surely must believe in marriage?

Mrs. Jones. Marriage with her is merely the awkward necessity of maintaining the human race. I fancy she in-

cludes it with dish washing as inevitable to the proper conduct of clean living.

Miss Earnest. Yes, she has the noble idea of a soul that sprung from the earth and soars to the unending heights of——. (*Enter* HARRY, *escorting* BERT *with great attention; his manner loverlike and anxious, her's unheeding and possibly bored.*)

Mrs. Jones. My dear——. (*Shakes hands.*)

Harry. (*Pompously.*) I present you to the Rev. Dr. Gibbons, the great apostle of Right and the valiant leader of the E. S. L. (DR. GIBBONS *comes up with a curious, somewhat quizzical air.* BERT *has very mannish costume.*)

Dr. Gibbons. Delighted to make your acquaintance. (*Very loftily as tho feeling her position.*) I hear great things of you. You can be of great use to us. (*Patronizingly.*)

Bert. (*Pulling off her gloves.*) All right. I'm there every time. Put it there. (*Giving her hand in a very free and easy fashion.* DR. GIBBONS *seems a little shocked.*)

Miss Earnest. Miss Donne has been very faithful. Her energies have been a great factor in our progress.

Dr. Gibbons. I am so glad to hear it, so very glad. (*She withdraws a little and joins* MISS TATTEL.)

Miss Tattel. Charming girl and so rich.

Dr. Gibbons. Eh! rich? (*Evidently interested.*)

Miss Tattel. Yes, very. Devotes all her time to doing good.

Dr. Gibbons. How very interesting. I must cultivate her.

Mrs. Jones. My dear Bert, I was afraid you might not come as you hate teas and receptions. You always say they are so essentially feline.

Bert. But really Mrs. Jones we must do something. I suppose you can't work for women without working in women's ways.

Mrs. Jones. That is what I say. Teas have their place in the economy of the universe. (DR. GIBBONS *now comes forward.*)

Dr. Gibbons. Oh! yes, we use all means, dear Miss Donne. That is, all means which are fair you know. All

means are fair you know in love and war. I hear you don't believe in love so you must take it out in war. (BERT *looks at her a little critically.*)

Bert. Love is something for weak females and silly boys. (*Contemptuously.*)

Harry. Oh! don't, you hurt.

Bert. I hope I do.

Harry. I flee, besides I hear the bell. (*Exit.*)

Dr. Gibbons. (*Amused.*) But have you never seen a man you admired?

Bert. Oh! yes, of course. I know one. He's a fine fellow. I admire him immensely. We are pals, John and I. But I meet him on the ground of friendship, and we get on swimmingly I can tell you.

Mrs. Jones. Oh! I am so happy to tell you he is to be here today.

Bert. What, John Manners at a woman's tea and that tea to give woman her rights. Heavens though, he must be daft. Why he perfectly hates everything that relates to the subject. We have regular jawing matches in my office. We were pitching ball yesterday and he got so mad at me that he went off in a huff. The old boy (*laughs*) muttered "damned lot of old tabbies." I called after him and said I heard, and that I'd give him a good pummelling if the ridiculous prejudices of the present age didn't prohibit a man from being knocked down by a woman. (*Enter* HARRY. *He hears the remark.*)

Harry. Yes they are only allowed at the present time to pull hair and call names. But that is only a merciful dispensation of Providence. If we could be knocked down in addition to all the rest of the things we have to endure where would we be? (*Exit and enters immediately escorting* JOHN MANNERS, *as he supposes.* JOHN *delays.*)

(*Tea is passed at odd intervals to occupy those not speaking.*)

Harry. Here comes the bold, bad woman hater, the object of scorn by all the fair sex, the man who simply won't——

Miss Earnest. See the great and good standards that we are striving for, the very elements which——

Annette. Oh! yes, Miss Earnest, he does see all that, but he is just a stupid man, all man, all dark ages, all medievalism, or orientalism, all——

Miss Earnest. Gracious, you don't mean that he believes in polygamy, in the debasing——

Annette. Oh! no. Only he won't flirt, won't frivol, won't do anything a man should.

Harry. But there are others——

Annette. Oh! you naughty boy, go away.

Harry. (*Piteously.*) I can't.

Dr. Gibbons. This is all very pretty, children, but we have higher things to discuss. I wish to see the singular young man who won't flirt. He surely is an anomaly.

Harry. He'd make a good suffragette, just like me.

Dr. Gibbons. (*Playfully with the antics of an elephant.*) Oh! but I thought you were a butler.

Harry. Yes I am. But you see I am not like 'Odge, I am also a suffragette. I am like (*Bowing profusely to* BERT) Miss Donne, I am a suffragent.

Dr. Gibbons. A suffragent! (*Smiling.*)

Harry. (*To* DR. GIBBONS.) That's what we call her. It's her clothes.

Bert. What is that? What did I hear?

Harry. (*Meekly.*) I said I'm a suffragette, that is a suffragent, suffer a gent don't you know; that's all. But (*In great haste*) where is that wretched Manners? Kissing the maid I'll bet.

Annette. Oh! Harry, how can you?

Harry. I can. I'm disorganized. I don't know what I am. I came in a man, I suddenly found myself a butler, then by the advent of our worthy president I became a suffragette. Poor Manners, I wonder what has happened to him.

Bert. Hating the maid, probably, with the rest of her sex.

Annette. Now don't, Bert, just because you don't like the men.

Bert. But I do like them, when they aren't cowards, and will stand up like men even if they do oppose a woman.

Mrs. Jones. Surely, Bert dear, they oppose us enough, they won't let us vote.

Bert. It isn't opposition, it is just laziness. But here he is at last. (*Enter* JOHN.)

Annette. You naughty man. Where have you been? We were just beginning to demolish your character and you are none too soon.

John. Well, you couldn't do that. It has been done already. (*Bitterly.*)

Miss Earnest. You don't mean——

Miss Tattel. Oh! do let us know all about it.

Mrs. Voisine. How dreadful!

Mrs. Jones. That is only an interesting episode.

Dr. Gibbons. My character has been demolished and reconstructed so many times that I feel very like a portable house.

Harry. I say, John, you have the appearance of a new born babe. You should bring your nurse with you when you beard lionesses in their den.

Mrs. Jones. Well, that *is* better than cats. You are improving my boy. (BERT *stands aside thinking.*) But Mr. Manners, I must present you to Dr. Gibbons, the rest you know. (*He shakes hands around, comes to* BERT, *looks at her inquiringly. She gives him her hand in a hearty manner.*)

Dr. Gibbons. I fear I am in much darkness in this matter. Do explain.

Miss Earnest. Yes, let us have the fullest account. We standing as we do at the side of the great yawning chasm. (HARRY *yawns.*)——

Harry. I trust, Miss Earnest, you are not becoming personal in your hatred of our sex.

Miss Earnest. Personal; I do not understand. You do not suppose the mere interposition of a bit of male flesh——

Harry. Say meat, Madam, flesh is too dignified for anything I feel I am now.

Miss Earnest. When great issues are waiting with gasping mouths. (HARRY *gasps.*)——

Harry. There you are again. Mrs. Jones I shall go home

if this continues. I side with 'Odge. Beware Madam, your only male suffragette will desert you if you are not careful.

Mrs. Jones. Be quiet, Harry. You are not respectful. Miss Earnest will feel hurt.

Miss Earnest. I care not for myself, but for the great and grand issues for which the very intensity of our souls seems like fleecy clouds——

Dr. Gibbons. Pardon me Miss Earnest, but we are most anxious to hear of Mr. Manners' misfortune.

Miss Tattel. Oh, yes, I am sure we are.

Mrs. Voisine. Quite sure. By the way dear Mrs. Jones I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Manners. He is I think the gentleman who is so bravely contesting the election of School Commissioner.

Mrs. Jones. Yes. Permit me to present him. Mr. Manners, Mrs. Voisine is our latest acquisition.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, I am so glad to meet you. In fact (*Turning to* Mrs. Jones.) I think it was on his account that I joined your society. (Miss Tattel *pricks up her ears.*) You know (*Apologetically.*) I take such a deep, very deep interest in all that affects our rising generation. Is it not right, Dr. Gibbons?

Dr. Gibbons. Surely. It is to the rising generation we look. The present seems past hope.

Miss Earnest. Yes, past hope, but not past help. If we had only the power in our own hands.

Harry. I should be electrocuted, yes, I know.

Annette. Now you silly boy, can't you be quiet?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes. I have heard so much of Mr. Manners' high principle, and the dislike he has of those horrid politicians, that I felt I should *so* like to meet him.

Bert. (*Bluntly.*) But I don't just see how you expected to meet him here.

Mrs. Voisine. (*A little confused.*) Oh! not just that, Miss Donne. It was, well, it was perhaps a kind of intuition. Perhaps an inspiration. (*Laughing.*)

John. I confess I did come here for help.

Bert. Help! You come to women for help. Shame.

John. Oh! is it shame to come to women for help, and why?

Bert. But you deny us our rights.

John. I do not deny you your rights.

Harry. Golly tho. He's right in it. He won't have an eye left when he leaves here. Jonah in the lions den. Oh! no Dan.

Annette. (*Aside.*) I'm so sorry for him, and he looks so manly and brave. (*Gives him an adoring look, which* HARRY *sees, and shakes his fist at her.*)

Bert. But you do not approve of our voting. You have said so.

John. No, not generally. (MISS EARNEST *gets excited.*)

Bert. You know you would even oppose it.

John. Perhaps, at times.

Bert. And you came here then to ask our help?

Miss Earnest. The eternal fitness of things should show

——

Harry. Don't bother him, he's down. Bert will pulverize him in a second. Be merciful.

John. Yes. I say frankly I came for help.

Miss Tattel. The dear boy. (*Tenderly.*)

Bert. But explain why you want help from those you despise.

John. (*Thoughtfully.*) I don't despise—certainly not you. (*Peculiarly.*)

Harry. Ah! bully boy. He knows when he's got his match.

Annette. Hush, Harry. You scare me.

Bert. I know. You are running for School Commissioner——

John. Yes, because to allow the beastly politicians to control the schools is to strike at the foundations of society.

Miss Earnest. Yes the fountain-head of inspiration which

——

Harry. Yes, just the spot where ideas begin to shoot. I am with you John, old boy, one suffragette on your side.

Bert. But while we all acknowledge the very great im-

portance of the cause there are many ways of viewing the welfare of that cause.

Miss Earnest. Yes. We have a principle which we shall defend, and in defending the eternal——

John. (*Earnestly.*) But that is just why I am here. It isn't a question whether women have their rights——

Miss Earnest. It isn't? The——

John. Pardon me. The politicians use every method, right or wrong. It is then only right that we should, in order to successfully oppose them, use every method at least that is fair.

Bert. True. But is it quite fair for you, who, we admit, stand for honesty and right, to come now to us for help, when you find yourself in a hole. Just because you are in a hole, and want to get out, you can pocket your pride and ask a favor, a political favor of a woman, simply because your pride is involved?

John. My pride is not involved when——

Harry. When you stoop to ask women for their votes.

Bert. Well put, Harry.

Harry. Now Bert, I didn't mean that. He's down enough now. Here's one suffragette who won't jump on him. Go slow Bert, men sometimes stand by each other.

Bert. No, but he takes occasion of a great and crying need to put us in a position where he thinks we will humiliate ourselves——

Miss Earnest. Which we will never do. It is not personal feeling, it is that which lies——

Harry. Yes, the politicians all do.

John. I do not wish you to humiliate yourselves. If there is any humiliation in the matter I think I am the one humiliated, to be here where I supposed at least I'd get sympathy if nothing else. You talk of principles. Well if you make a thing a matter of principle which is only a matter of pride, then I confess I have made a mistake. But Ethelberta Donne I had judged differently.

Mrs. Jones. Good for you John.

Dr. Gibbons. No, Mr. Manners do not think that. Miss Donne I am sure does not quite mean that.

Bert. I am not so sure, by gracious.

Harry. Hit him again, Bert.

Bert. Oh! Harry do be quiet. You never had a sober minute in your life.

Harry. (*Aside.*) Gee, how did she ever find me out? (*Exit.*)

Bert. Now, John, look here. I know you do not come here for sordid reasons, that isn't in you. But you do not seem to see that to differ from us so radically as you do in principles, and then expect to act with us in practice, is putting us all in a false light.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, Miss Donne, it seems to me we should be made very ridiculous in the eyes of the world. But I do sympathize with Mr. Manners in his desire for help at this time. It is so important for the children.

Dr. Gibbons. Certainly we must stand up for the children. It seems as tho Mr. Manners has acted with great discretion in this matter. It does not seem to me like personal pride but rather like a desperate case where strong measures are necessary. If Mr. Manners can forget that he is a man in his desire to further the welfare of the human race, it seems to me we can forget we are women in the same cause. Perhaps Mr. Manners would not have been so ready to ask our help or to conceed our value had matters taken a different turn with him. Will Mr. Manners allow an old woman to suggest that in life we have to make many compromises, and when a compromise is not wrong in fact, it ought not to be in principle.

Miss Tattel. How beautiful!

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, just my idea only better expressed.

John. But I don't see the compromise. There should be no compromise in that which is right.

Miss Earnest. No compromise in giving up the cherished thought——

Bert. Yes, he can see no compromise when he wants anything.

Dr. Gibbons. Don't say that. You are much too hard on him. (*Turning to* JOHN.) You said, so far as I can understand it, that in running for school commissioner you have

excited the enmity of the politicians who apparently have done something to injure you?

John. Yes, they are trying to blacken my character and make it appear that I am not fit to be school commissioner.

Dr. Gibbons. And what is the nature of the charge they bring against you?

John. That is just what I don't know.

Bert. Oh, your character will take care of itself. Be a man and face them down. It is not expected of a man to be weak. Look at me. Am I weak? I scorn the idea.

Annette. So do I. (*Laughing.*)

Bert. A little scandal will only go a great way when it is nursed. Don't be a nurse.

John. I don't care for myself. It's what I represent.

Miss Tattel. Oh! but a scandal is such a dreadful thing.

Mrs. Voisine. Dreadful. I am so sorry for Mr. Manners.

John. Are you. Then help me, help me to do what I am trying to do. You say the school, the coming generation are the most important, the very things we must look to, to accomplish what we are all aiming at. Surely a little denial of self-pride, a too close adherence cannot work together. If we can only forget that we are as one——

Bert. But can we? You won't give us our rights, why should we acknowledge your claims?

John. It isn't a question of rights or claims. This is now a matter of doing, doing because it is right and we know it is right, and thinking out the reasons afterwards.

Dr. Gibbons. Why you argue like a woman. You are half a suffragette already. As you know I am quite on your side.

Annette. (*Joyfully.*) That's it. It is always the man, I knew he would win.

Mrs. Voisine. Of course if I could help you, I should be so glad. I do like to help people so. Besides (*Thinking.*) perhaps I can think of a way. Oh! I know I can. When can I see you, tomorrow?

John. At my office.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! yes. I know what I shall do. I will go now. I am sure you will excuse me (*To* Mrs. Jones.) Adieu. (*Exit.*)

Mrs. Jones. Surely a sweet woman. Really quite an acquisition.

Dr. Gibbons. I feel Mr. Manners that really we must support you. At any rate I shall do all I can. I presume if all the women we can muster in the local society were to vote you would be elected?

John. I am quite sure of that. At least it would have a great weight with the community by showing you have confidence in me.

Bert. Ah! yourself again.

John. Not at all. How can you be so unfair? (*Angrily.*)

Bert. I am not. Just just.

Miss Earnest. It seems that perhaps under the great stress of circumstances which——

Annette. Oh! yes of course. We will all vote for him. It will be such fun. And Mrs. Jones you will have a tea to celebrate the event. He must be elected.

Miss Tattel. How can we refuse. It is our duty. We must try. So good of Mrs. Voisine. I do wonder who she is.

Dr. Gibbons. It matters little, my dear, who she is so long as she does. She may have some influence with these politicians.

Miss Earnest. But we could never permit that.

John. Oh! not all politicians are bad. I have faith in her, she seems earnest and certainly looks capable.

Bert. (*With a sneer.*) Place dependence on a woman. John Manners you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Always woman, woman, and never a woman's right. (*Enter* HARRY *in haste.*)

Harry. I have it, I have it.

All together. What, what is it?

Harry. I have the clew to your reputation. Oh! old fellow it is the old, old story. Don't tell me. (*Dancing and waving his hands.*)

John. (*Gasping.*) My reputation!

Harry. Yes, your reputation, you rascal. You, so demure, so high-toned, so superior, so much above us mortals, so—so—Oh! I can't contain myself.

Miss Tattel. (*Eagerly.*) Oh! do tell us, do tell us. I can't wait.

Mrs. Joncs. Harry, you are a rascal. Do you know you are inflicting torture?

Harry. Yes, I know it. You aren't the only victim. Bert jump on him, he deserves it. Who would ever have suspected it?

John. You might at least let us know.

Harry. I think perhaps I had better not tell.

Miss Tattel. Oh! (*Groans.*)

Miss Earncst. This, boy, is too serious a time to make light of things of grave importance.

Harry. But hurrah, it is too good to be true.

John. Will you be so kind as to tell it?

Harry. Do you really want me to tell it? Tell it right here?

John. Yes, right here!

Harry. Well, then here goes. It's a woman.

All (*Together.*) A woman!

Harry. (*Grinning and bobbing his head with satisfaction.*) Yep, a woman, a real strong woman. You are right, old chap, get a woman to catch a woman. I mean, a thief to catch a thief. How unfortunate I seem today in my experiences. (*All look amazed and turn to* JOHN. *He stands dumbfounded.*)

John. (*After a silcnce.*) You mean my character has been besmirched in connection with a woman?

Harry. (*Ecstaticallv.*) Yep.

John. And this is the shaft of my enemies. (*The ladies look blank.* MISS TATTEL *whispers to* ANNETTE *who giggles,* MRS. JONES *has a quizzical smile and* MISS EARNEST *is evidently horrified. Enter* MRS. VOISINE.)

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! I forgot to say—— Why, what is the matter?

Dr. Gibbons. We have just learned Mr. Manners' reputation is involved with a woman.

Mrs. Voisine. A woman!

Dr. Gibbons. I am not sure——

Miss Tattel. How dreadful!

Mrs. Jones. Yes, John, you have placed us in a very awkward position.

John. But surely you will not fail me now?

Dr. Gibbons. This is very serious, very serious indeed.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, indeed.

Dr. Gibbons. There are many things for us, we are women, to think of. We have ourselves to protect.

John. But for that reason you can best show your sympathy with a cause like the one I stand for.

Miss Earnest. But not to tarnish our names, to soil ourselves by condoning an intrigue, that might blast——

Harry. Oh! come now, you are in no particular danger. Your face is your fortune.

Miss Earnest. Horrid boy!

John. For shame that a human issue should be made subservient to a personal fear!

Dr. Gibbons. But Mr. Manners, I do not think it is that. You must remember no great matter can be decided at once——

Bert. Yes it can.

Dr. Gibbons. Of course you would agree with me——

Miss Earnest. That we could not place ourselves in any equivocal position——

Bert. Most certainly.

John. Oh! Bert.

Bert. I do say so most decidedly. We can never place ourselves in any equivocal position.

John. You too, Bert?

Bert. Yes I say so too. Never can we afford, standing as we do against the general opinion of mankind, never can we afford to put ourselves in an equivocal position. Don't let us be cowards and shrink from our duty no matter what personal feeling we each may have.

Miss Earnest. And you are with us?

Bert. No, you are with me. (*They look surprised.*)

John. Oh! Bert. (*In despair.*)

Bert. We can never afford, John Manners, for idle gossip ever to go back on an honest man. We will stand for

you. (*Gives him her hand.*) Am I right? (*They all gasp a moment then say yes.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE—JOHN'S *office in an office building.* BERT'S *office is just across the hall.* JOHN *alone.*

John. (*Dropping pen.*) Hang it! What's the matter with me? I am all unstrung. (*Walks around.*) This wretched business is getting on my nerves. Here I am twenty-six and upset just because some dirty rascals get up a story about a woman. Woman! Bah! Mighty little I care about a woman. A Woman! Well, I suppose they have their uses, but it is hard sometimes to discover them. They simper and grin and look pretty and make fools of the men. Thank heaven they have never done that to me. I fancy a woman would have to try awhile to do that. Now the kind of woman I like is one who can forget she is a woman, who can take life seriously, in short a woman who can act like a man. Bert is just such a woman. She and I have been pals for a long time, just old pals. No nonsense, no love, ha, ha, love with Bert. It is funny. Why I should as soon think of making love to a lamp-post. But—by the way I wonder just what love is. I've never looked it up. I will now. Come, old Webster, let's see what you know about it. (*Looks at dictionary.*) Devotes a whole column to the subject. (*Reads.*) Humph! All I can get out of it is "devoted attachment or tender feeling for one of the opposite sex." Say, I don't think old Webster knew what love was. I'll look at his picture. (*Looks and laughs.*) Think of his loving! Love, ha, ha. (*Enter* MRS. VOISINE.)

Mrs. Voisine. Ah! good morning. (*She smiles in a coquettish manner. He looks around in surprise and some confusion.*) I trust I am not intruding. (*With a saucy manner.* JOHN *recovers himself and offers a chair.*)

John. Oh! no, not at all, pray be seated. (*She does so with some by play and looks around. He looks at her with curiosity and evidently waits to hear her business. She hesitates, then laughs a little.*) You seem to be amused.

Mrs. Voisine. Well, yes, I am.

John. Really, perhaps,—you might be so kind as to share your amusement with me.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, so I might, but I do not see just how. (*Laughs.*)

John. Oh! perhaps you were laughing at me. (*She shrugs her shoulders.*) I suppose I am absurd.

Mrs. Voisine. (*A little tenderly.*) Oh! no, you could never be that.

John. Well, what is it then?

Mrs. Voisine. (*With a little pant.*) Must I tell?

John. I wish you would. (*She laughs.*) More mysterious.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! I'll be frank. You were talking about love as I came in. (*Archly.*)

John. Yes, I was soliloquizing, I believe. (*Somewhat shamefacedly.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, and I did not mean to hear you—but the door was open.

John. Yes it is hot here.

Mrs. Voisine. And so I heard your remarks about love.

John. It seems a common subject.

Mrs. Voisine. It is—very.

John. Then perhaps you laughed because it is so common. It bored you.

Mrs. Voisine. (*A little significantly.*) Love never bores me. I mean it never bores a woman. (*John looks bewildered.*) Don't be surprised. I'm not a frivolous woman.

John. I didn't think you were.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! but you might. Men are so wrong in their judgments.

John. Are they?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, terribly.

John. I didn't know it.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! perhaps not. There are many things men don't know.

John. For instance.

Mrs. Voisine. That love bores a woman. There, now, don't look that way. (*He hasn't.*) I know just what you

men always think. (JOHN *looks bewildered.*)

John. Think!

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, think. Please remember I did not begin this subject. It is of course silly. But I was so amused to hear you speaking of love——

John. But you say it is so common——

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, common and so to hear you talking about it roused my sense of humor.

John. (*Confused.*) My talking about it!

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, it seemed, ha, ha, it seemed, ha, ha,——

John. It seemed—ha, ha,—— (*Severely.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Why, I must laugh. It seemed as funny as if you had been repeating the multiplication table.

John. Well, I don't see why I can't repeat the multiplication table if I want to. (*Testily.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, surely you can,—but it would seem a little queer, would it not at this late day?

John. I must confess I do not see what you are driving at.

Mrs. Voisine. No? Well you were soliloquizing about love, not?

John. Yes, but what had that to do with the multiplication table?

Mrs. Voisine. Oh, you don't see. (*Impatiently.*) Well surely it must be as familiar to you as that.

John. What, love?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, love.

John. (*Upset.*) Love—love—it's rot.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! is it? I hadn't thought so.

John. No, perhaps not. You are a woman.

Mrs Voisine. That sounds very like a sneer. (*Hurt.*)

John. Well, it wasn't. I think it is all rot, anyway.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Archly.*) You? You think it rot?

John. Yes.

Mrs. Voisine. You, after your experience, at your time of life, after the—ha—ha—life you have led——

John. The life I've led!

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, you a handsome, attractive man. (JOHN *looks pleased.*) You tell me love is all—ha—ha, ha——. Oh! it is too funny. To think at your age——. Oh! no you

can't believe I am such a fool. No. no. Oh! you men! (*Coquettishly.* BERT *appears at the door unobserved by* JOHN.)

John. Now Mrs. Voisine please don't misunderstand me. You really—please—why do you torment me this way? (BERT *retires after a look of surprise, but subdues a laugh as she goes away.*)

Mrs. Voisine. I don't torment you, or at least I don't mean to torment you. You were laughing at love. You who have had so much experience.

John. What?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, of course. At your age, now don't try to fool an old woman——

John. Love! I tell you I don't know what it is. Do you know?

Mrs. Voisine. I? I know. I have been married.

John. Well, what is it like?

Mrs. Voisine. Like? How should I know. Marriage does not always mean love. (MISS TATTEL *appears at the door and is very much surprised, also delighted. She knocks very feebly.*)

John. Oh! (*Laughing.*) I thought it did. That is what I have always been taught.

Mrs. Voisine. You have been taking lessons, eh?

John. No, (*Annoyed.*) no, of course not, it is all rot.

Mrs. Voisine. Are you quite sure? (*With a laughing glance.*)

John. Yes, sure. (MISS TATTEL *again knocks feebly and coughs. They do not heed her. She tries to act discomfited.*)

Mrs. Voisine. But I tho't you were in some trouble, something about a woman?

John. Yes, so it seems.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Archly.*) How could there be trouble with a woman without love?

John. That is just what I can't see.

Mrs. Voisine. Nor I. Now I do want to help you so much. (*A little tenderly.* MISS TATTEL *again coughs and they hear and both start.*) Oh! Miss Tattel!

John. I beg your pardon I did not hear you.

Miss Tattel. (*Effusively.*) Oh! I just came, just this moment. I was not here at all. I didn't hear anything, nothing at all. (MRS. VOISINE *smiles significantly.*)

John. There was nothing to hear. Mrs. Voisine promised to come to see me yesterday. (*Pause while* MISS TATTEL *looks very expectant.*) ——eh, she said she thought she could help me——

Miss Tattel. And she has? (*Inquiringly.*)

John. Now, I don't know.

Mrs. Voisine. (*With a laugh and some coquetry.*) I was beginning to, was I not Mr. Manners? (*To* MISS TATTEL.) You see he is very easy to help.

Miss Tattel. Yes, so I thought—I mean, I should fancy.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Giving* MISS TATTEL *an expressive look.*) It is not often we can help men in such a crisis——

John. Crisis! Do you call it a crisis?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, crisis. Why not? You said your reputation was attacked, you threw yourself into our hands, you asked for help—you——

John. But crisis is a pretty strong word. (*Enter* HARRY.)

Mrs. Voisine. But for a man who says he knows nothing of love—— (*Sees* HARRY.) Surely Mr. McMayne you will agree with me that under the circumstances——

Harry. What circumstances?

Mrs. Voisine. Why that Mr. Manners should be attacked because of a woman and then say he knows nothing about love surely does produce a crisis.

Harry. John you are certainly a curiosity. Here I find you talking with a pretty woman, informing her you know nothing about love and say it isn't a crisis. Well I will tell you one thing, the sooner you find out about love the better it will be for you. I hear all sorts of tales. Not a soul will ever believe such a cock and bull story. John you are sly.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! no I don't think so, Mr. McMayne, I think——

Miss Tattel. Oh! it is so interesting!

Mrs. Voisine. I think Mr. Manners deserves all of our

support, and perhaps some of our pity. (MISS TATTEL *eyes* MRS. VOISINE *curiously.*)

John. Pity! Why pity?

Mrs. Voisine. Because a man who knows nothing about love is liable to fall a prey to any designing woman.

John. Not if he steers clear of them.

Mrs. Voisine. Many ships have been lost because the compass was wrong.

John. (*Bluntly.*) But you can't be shipwrecked if you do not go to sea.

Harry. Oh! you can't, look at me. My life is one long wreck.

Miss Tattel. Oh! dear, how very interesting. (*Enter* MISS EARNEST.) You dear, you have missed so much.

Miss Earnest. So much. We all miss in this world so many great opportunities which even see mto reach out to us like hands of those who are lost in wreck——

Harry. Yes, we were just talking of shipwreck. John here is pretty nigh done for.

Miss Earnest. He is lost? Do you mean——

Harry. Yes for sure. He's a goner. Do you know he doesn't even know what love is. Why even you know that.

Miss Earnest. Me, love, you are crazy young man. (*Enter* BERT.) By the——

Bert. It does seem a little malapropos. It is some time I fancy since you experienced the tender passion.

Miss Earnest. (*Aghast.*) Tender passion why——

Harry. Forgotten all about it. We know. John seems to have forgotten. I just arrived in time to hear Mrs. Voisine refresh his memory.

Mrs. Voisine. Mr. McMayne, I fear you wilfully misunderstood me.

Bert. Well, for my part I can't see what Miss Earnest's past love affairs have to do with John's election.

Miss Earnest. (Horrified.) My past love affairs! Why I never had any. I never had such things. I——

Harry. Things! They are not things Madam, they are feelings. I guess I know. (*Looking tenderly at* BERT.)

Miss Earnest. I never had feelings. I——

Harry. Yes, that is just what John says. Look at him, see what a reputation he has. If you continue in your determination to down the men you will be in just such a fix. I tell you Miss Earnest these people who don't know what love is had better look out. Why, I have all I can do to keep my head above water.

Bert. Don't be absurd. We all know John hasn't any more idea of love than a little yellow dog. John is straight business. So am I. I think we can all take care of our love affairs. (*Enter* MRS. JONES *and* DR. GIBBONS.)

Dr. Gibbons. Good morning everybody. What is this I hear? Talking about love. Now really.

Mrs. Jones. I knew women were always interested, but I hardly expected John Manners to be.

John (*Hotly.*) I'm not.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! but I thought you were. (*They all stare.*)

John. I? What nonsense.

Mrs. Voisine. Well you asked about it. (*Shyly.*)

John. (*Ashamed.*) Yes, I did say something. (*Acts confused.* MISS TATTEL *whispers to* MISS EARNEST *who looks stern.*)

Mrs. Voisine. (*To* DR. GIBBONS.) It seems silly I know. But I believe Mr. Manners was speaking about that attack on his character and said he could not understand it. I suggested he might have been in love—— (JOHN *disgusted.*)

Dr. Gibbons. Yes, but please explain further.

Mrs. Voisine. And he said he did not know what love was,—so—I tried to explain.

Harry. I hope you did not try to demonstrate. (*He giggles.*)

Mrs. Jones. (*Smiling.*) Hush you naughty boy.

Dr. Gibbons. Really—— (*Hesitates.*) it seems to me very remarkable—it—why it——

Harry. Yes it seems too good to be true. And if it is too good to be true it is.

Mrs. Jones. Oh! Harry, do hush.

Dr. Gibbons. You said you were instructing him——

Mrs. Voisine. (*Simpering.*) No,—no—not instructing

him. I couldn't do that——only well, he said he didn't know——

Dr. Gibbons. And you told him you did. Just how that is going to help elect him I don't see. (*Severely.*)

Miss Earnest. No, nor I. Nor do I see what my early love affairs——

Harry. (*Joyfully.*) Oh! you had them. Now John after that surrender you must give in.

Miss Earnest. I did not have them. By the——

Harry. Please don't swear. I am too young and too tender. The example would be awful.

Mrs. Jones. Harry, you must behave yourself.

Harry. I don't see why. Miss Earnest is looking for her rights. Swearing is one of them. How do I know where she will stop. My youth must be protected.

Miss Earnest. But this is all nonsense. We are here for a great and glorious cause and the trivial things of earth must be brushed aside. (*Makes a motion with her hand*)——

Harry. My, though, she will become vituperative next. (*Aside.*)

Miss Earnest. I fear (*Looking at* MRS. VOISINE.) that sufficient weight has not been given to the gravity——

Harry. There, you know it now, so does John. These things overtake one in after life.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Feeling somewhat hurt.*) I think perhaps I had better go. The conversation has not taken a serious turn, and, Mr. Manners, I shall have to seek some other occasion in which to explain my ideas. (HARRY *puts his hand to his mouth and the ladies look severe.* BERT *smiles.*) I am sorry, Mr. Manners, to have been interrupted.

John. But I will see you again. You can then give me the information you promised. (MRS. VOISINE *gives a significant little smile and goes out.* HARRY *claps his hand over his mouth and a silence exists which becomes painful.* JOHN *perceives it and turning continues.*) Well? (*Still silence.* JOHN *gets nervous and* BERT *comes to his rescue.*)

Bert. I think, Dr. Gibbons, you had something to propose——

Dr. Gibbons. (*Slowly.*) Yes, something to propose, but

I do not know quite if I care to propose it now. (*With emphasis.*)

Bert. And why not now?

John. (*Eagerly.*) And why not now? Surely we want all the help we can get. (*Enter Mrs. Voisine.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! I cannot find the elevator. Did I turn the wrong way?

John. You must have done so. I will show you. (*Exeunt.*)

Harry. Well I never.

Miss Earnest. Never what?

Harry. Never saw anything neater than that.

Dr. Gibbons. Pray, explain.

Harry. (*Putting his finger along side his nose.*) Just wait and see how long it takes him to find the elevator. I'll bet he's forgotten all about it.

Mrs. Jones. Oh! Harry for shame. (*Laughing.*)

Dr. Gibbons. Surely you don't mean——

Miss Earnest. It cannot be possible that in such a crisis when the very heavens are expectant——

Harry. Oh! come down to earth.

Miss Earnest. Come down to earth! (*Gasps.*)

Bert. Of course, Harry, you are absurd. Nothing could be more natural.

Harry. That's just what I say. She is pretty.

Bert. Harry, if you don't stop making fun of John you will hear from me.

Harry. There now, there you go, standing up for John all the time never giving me a show.

Bert. Of course I'll stand up for him, he and I are pals. (Dr. Gibbons *raises her eyebrows.*)

Bert. John is as straight as the day and you know it. If this woman is a bit silly it isn't his fault.

Miss Tattel. But it was *very* queer.

Bert. I don't see it. He can't help what a woman does. He is as innocent as a lamb.

Harry Oh! (*Nods his head.*) And like the lamb is led to the slaughter.

Dr. Gibbons. After the rumors we have heard it seems to

me very singular to find a pretty woman here talking to him——

Miss Tattel. Yes, and about love, too.

Mrs. Jones. Oh! love is merely an incident.

Miss Earnest. You may think so, Mrs. Jones, but to me——

Harry. It is vital.

Miss Earnest. Wretch.

Dr. Gibbons. It seems no one knows her and she is pretty.

Harry. And that deserves death from her sex, I suppose Madam if you all had your rights there wouldn't be a pretty woman left.

Dr. Gibbons. (*Not noticing* HARRY.) But for us, now, at this juncture to compromise our cause, why surely it would expose us to unmerciful ridicule. It is well to stand up for the right but we must be sure it is right. (*Turning to* BERT.) You are sure of your friend and I am quite in sympathy with you. In fact I agree that your friend is a fine man and deserves your good opinion, but I do not like the situation.

Mrs. Jones. Perhaps she is a widow. If so, John has as good a right to be in love with her as anyone else.

Bert. (*Angrily.*) But that is nonsense.

Mrs. Jones. Why nonsense? I am a widow myself. (*Looks at* HARRY *tenderly.*)

Bert. (*Testily.*) Perhaps you think John is in love with you.

Mrs. Jones. No I don't. I wish he were. I'd marry *him.* (BERT *sniffs.*)

Dr. Gibbons. I, too, a ma widow. I suppose I am human——

Harry. You too, madam! How can you be human and want your rights?

Dr. Gibbons. (*Not noticing* HARRY.) I am human, as I said, but I do not think at the present time in a lawyer's office, the subject of love is especially apropos, even if the lady happens to be a widow.

Miss Tattel. But who knows if she really is a widow?

Dr. Gibbons. He has always been above reproach, you all agree?

Miss Earnest. So far. But how do we know when the demon of unrest may seize a man——

Harry. Yes, or even a woman.

Miss Earnest. And he be swept off his feet—into the whirlpool——

Harry. (*Aside.*) My though hasn't she had a time!

Bert. But Miss Earnest it is nonsense to suppose that John has ever even had the chance, much less to be swept off his pedal extremities.

Miss Tattel. Yes, yes, but why doesn't he come back.

Harry. Perhaps he has already been swept over the brink of the elevator well.

Miss Earnest. I for one am for going very slowly in this matter. It is very easy to take a misstep, it is not so easy to right it.

Harry. She speaks with conviction. (*Aside.*)

Bert. You can never make a mistake with a man like John.

Dr. Gibbons. You are very sure. (*Smiling.*) Perhaps, no, you are above love. Pretty nice man.

Miss Tattel. But that is why he is tempted.

Harry. The more the temptation, the nicer the man.

Bert. The rule doesn't always work.

Harry. Oh! Bert you are so cruel.

Bert. No, just. I know John. I also know you.

Harry. (*Joyfully.*) To know him was to love him.

Mrs. Jones. Yes, Harry, we all love you if that is what you mean.

Miss Earnest. (*Decisively.*) I don't.

Miss Tattel. No, nor I. (*Smiling.*)

Harry. And yet you believe in your rights. Ahem!

Dr. Gibbons. I never saw a conversation drift as this has. We are here to help Mr. Manners. We came united in our purpose, we found a flirtation——

Bert. Don't say that.

Dr. Gibbons. Not only a flirtation but a silly one at that. After the unpleasant news we had yesterday, after we had nobly thrown aside our very natural pride——

Bert. Please don't say that.

Dr. Gibbons. After we had put into a cause, quite subsidiary to the great one for which we are working, our interests and our efforts we find the seriousness of our purpose derided and we are threatened not only with failure but even with contempt.

Bert. Yes I see how you feel and in a way are right, but we are going now to put aside any little thing that stands in our way and help John win this election. We are.

Dr. Gibbons. But I feel we are now in a very peculiar position.

Bert. How so?

Dr. Gibbons. This Mrs. Voisine, explain her.

Miss Earnest. Yes, explain why this flippant——

Harry. Yes, explain. I'm dying to know. Besides she's pretty.

Dr. Gibbons. I for myself do not like—well like what I have seen.

Harry. (*Solemnly.*) Nor I.

Mrs. Jones. That was just fun.

Miss Earnest. But fun, when——

Harry. Yes, we must have some fun.

Miss Tattel. Then it was just fun.

Harry. You bet. Didn't you ever have an—? Only just rights? My what a life!

Dr. Gibbons. To tell the plain truth, it looked to me like a plain flirtation.

Bert. Oh! Dr. Gibbons, please don't speak that way. (JOHN *enters.*) John was never guilty of such a thing. He doesn't know how to flirt.

John. Flirt. What is this, flirt?

Bert. John, you don't know how to flirt. You know you don't.

Harry. I hope (*Solemnly.*) you haven't tried him (JOHN *is bewildered.*)

John. What makes you think that?

Bert. It is beyond you.

John. I don't know, I never thought.

Harry. Then think, Oh! think hard.

John. Flirt, whom would I flirt with?

Bert. Oh! John. I am having such a time. These ladies all came here this morning quite decided to help you——

John. They are going to, aren't they?

Bert. I hope so. But John they are now wavering.

John. Wavering, why are they wavering?

Bert. Oh! John how can I tell you?

John. Straight out, I am never afraid of the truth.

Bert. They say you have been flirting.

John. I? I flirt. Flirt, how do I know how to flirt.

Bert. That is what I said. You are as innocent as a baby. (JOHN *looks a little disgusted.*) You haven't the least idea of such things.

John. No, nor you either. Apparently we are just two babes.

Bert. Yes we are, John, and the old crows will come and bury us under the leaves.

Harry. Hens, you mean.

John. But if I don't know how to flirt and haven't anyone to flirt with——

Bert. But they say you have.

John. I have! Nobody but you, Bert, and you wouldn't if you could.

Bert. But they say you were flirting with Mrs. Voisine.

John. (*Amazed.*) With Mrs. Voisine, why I don't know her.

Miss Earnest. But you were talking love to her.

John. About love, yes. (*Snappishly.*) *not* love. I might even talk about love to you. I hope my reputation would not suffer. (*Disgusted.*)

Miss Earnest. But it is silly if not criminal.

Bert. But, John, don't despair, we will stick by you.

Miss Earnest. Not I. The eternal fitness of——

Harry. You mean self-respect and the cause——

Miss Tattel. But I couldn't if it's criminal——

Dr. Gibbons. I think Mr. Manners, it is wise for us to abstain from further discussion. You see how the ladies feel and Mrs. Jones if your carriage is waiting, all things considered, I think we would be wise to return to the house. Besides we may miss Mrs. Croesus. Good-day Mr. Manners.

Be cheerful. We trust it will all come right. I for myself do not like the looks of Mrs. Voisine. You may have keener instincts. (*Severely. Exeunt* MRS. JONES *and* DR. GIBBONS.)

Miss Earnest. (*With great dignity.*) For my part, Mr. Manners, I regret having entered your office after finding what was here.

Miss Tattel. Oh! Mr. Manners I am so sorry. I do hope there is nothing criminal. Goodby. (*Exeunt* MISSES EARNEST *and* TATTEL.)

Bert. (*Savagely.*) The old cats!

Harry. Sh, sh, you'll hurt the cause.

Bert. (*Clinching her teeth.*) ——the cause!

Harry. There, there, come Bert, it's one of your rights, but let me say it.

Bert. (*Earnestly.*) Say it.

Harry. Damn.

Bert. Louder.

Harry. Damn!

Bert. There, I feel better. (*Tuning to* JOHN.) Come now, old fellow, brace up, we will down them yet. Fighting for right, pah! for right and for some little —— nonsense——

Harry. Do you want my help again?

Bert. Right is right, and just because of a little foolishness, just a mere chance, such as might happen to anyone, even a woman like Dr. Gibbons gets bugs into her head. Pah! I never saw such a —— lot——

Harry. Help?

Bert. And all about a woman, a woman whom no one knows about, a woman——

Harry. Damned pretty woman. (BERT *stops, looks thoughtfully, then looks at* JOHN, *hesitating.*)

Bert. Say, John, you weren't flirting with her?

John. Oh! Bert.

Bert. Well, men have done such things.

Harry. I think I'll be going. (*Exit.*)

Bert. (*Pleadingly.*) John do tell me you were not flirting with—with that thing? (*Enter* HARRY *and* ANNETTE.)

Harry. Ran into her outside. Told her she'd missed the nicest thing in life, seeing John flirt.

Annette. Oh! I am so sorry Bert. I'm always just too late. But did you see it?

Bert. I don't know.

Annette. Don't know?

Bert. No. I don't flirt myself, and John *says* he doesn't, so I can't tell.

Annette. But you can flirt without knowing it.

Bert. You can? I don't see how. Explain.

Annette. Why it is just like walking in your sleep.

Bert. It is.

Annette. Yes, of course. I have often flirted with John.

Bert. You have?

Annette. Yes, but he didn't know it.

Bert. Then perhaps that was the case with Mrs. Voisine.

Annette. With Mrs. Voisine. Was he flirting with Mrs. Voisine?

Bert. Well it looked like it.

Annette. With that woman, why I heard she was an awful woman.

John. You did. (*Excited.*)

Annette. Now John, dear, don't worry. You'd never have anything to do with her. (BERT *starts as though suspicious.*)

Harry. Oh! I guess she'll flirt all right, if what I hear at the club is true.

John. You hear a lot of stuff at the club. It is almost as bad as a woman's rights association.

Bert. Now Harry what did you hear? Tell us plainly. We want to know.

Annette. Yes, do tell. I'm just dying of curiosity. What a pity Miss Tattel isn't here too. She is always so much interested.

Harry. Now look here girls, it isn't fair for a man to tell everything he knows.

Bert. But we must know and know now.

Harry. It seems to me (*Sulkily.*) you are somewhat interested, perhaps on your own account.

Bert. (*Innocently.*) No, on John's.

Harry. Yes, that is what I mean. It is on John's account. You don't like to see him flirting with a pretty woman.

Bert. (*Angrily.*) I think you need a thrashing. You know where my interest lies.

Harry. Well I'll say just this. You know John and I are good friends and if John is a little human I am not going to give him away, that is all there is about it.

Bert. (*Slowly.*) So you can give him away? (JOHN *meanwhile frowns.*)

Harry. No I don't. I mean just this: He is a man and if he is square with me I have nothing further to ask. If he wants to have a good time with a pretty woman I certainly am not one to fire stones.

John. (*Restraining himself.*) But that does not explain what you hear at the club.

Harry. Just what I hear at woman's rights associations. You suggested it yourself. You *will* be a suffragette so you must hear gossip. I merely state Mrs. Voisine is a pretty woman. That is all I know. You may know more. (*Significantly.*)

John. Well I know this Harry McMayne, if I don't know about love and such stuff I am man enough not to slur a woman. Mrs. Voisine is pretty, a very pretty woman. In that I agree with you. But to put any stigma on her, I won't, there is no reason.

Harry. Nor do I put any stigma on her. I simply said she's pretty. She can't help that. And they say at the club she will flirt.

John. And is that all?

Harry. Yes that is all, what more do you wish to know?

Bert. I think that is enough. Why does she want to come here and raise an issue with us when she bears such a reputation?

John. Come now, Bert, you are unfair.

Harry. (*Grinning.*) Oh! Bert, remember she is pretty and we men are weak. Don't be foolish John. Be a man, and just a man, flirt if you like.

John. I don't want to flirt and I think it is all foolishness.

Annette. But John you must have given some encouragement.

John. Never. I say never.

Bert. (*Suddenly.*) But you were talking about love to her.

John. Oh! drop it.

Annette. Why, I always thought that was flirting, unless you were in earnest.

John. Oh! what madness. You people drive me mad.

Harry. Then Annette, we had better go.

Bert. Yes, perhaps John can explain it better when we are alone.

Harry. All right. But be easy with him Bert. Don't make him suffer too much. Good-bye.

Annette. Good-bye, Bert, and cheer up John, it is hard never to have known what love is. Oh! Bert do teach him a few things.

Bert. Teach him! (*Exeunt* HARRY *and* ANNETTE.)

John. Well?

Bert. Well? (*Long pause.*)

John. (*Bitterly.*) You might teach me a few things.

Bert. (*Slowly and thoughtfully.*) You need it.

John. Oh! do I? (*Nodding his head impressively.*)

Bert. Yes, I must say I do think so.

John. (*Sarcastically.*) You call yourself a friend. It is surely the part of a friend to help a brother.

Bert. (*Slowly.*) Yes I am a friend.

John. Yes?

Bert. And it is the part of a friend to help another.

John. And are you quite sure you know how?

Bert. Perhaps I might guess.

John. Then do it.

Bert. (*Laughing.*) I judge from Annette's remark I was to teach you what love is.

John. (*Earnestly.*) Yes do. (BERT *starts.*)

Bert. But has this to do with woman's rights?

John. I don't know. But if there is such a thing as love it ought to be her right to teach a man what it is.

Bert. I wonder. I thought it just came.

John. Oh! it comes does it, like the flowers that bloom in the spring tra-la——

Bert. But you make light of it.

John. Why not—ha—ha——. You must confess it is funny for you and me to be talking about love.

Bert. I don't know.

John. You believe in it.

Bert. Let me see. I sometimes think I do.

John. You sometimes think you do. (*Slowly.*) And what makes you? (*She looks at him carefully.*)

Bert. You. (*She rises and walks around.*)

John. I? (*In surprise.*) Pray why do I?

Bert. Shall I tell?

John. Pray do.

Bert. Well, we must take the world as we find it. It is not reasonable to suppose we are all exceptions to the rules which govern that world. What might be quite natural for one would be impossible for another.

John. How so? Illustrate.

Bert. For instance. You are a man. A man is notoriously helpless when he gets on in life. He must marry.

John. Why must?

Bert. Because he is incomplete.

John. Why is not a woman incomplete?

Bert. She is sometimes. Then she must marry or she becomes a busy old maid always attending to other people's business.

John. Do you expect to marry?

Bert. (*With scorn.*) Marry, I marry? Of course not.

John. Then you feel yourself complete. So do I.

Bert. But you aren't, you know.

John. I didn't know.

Bert. But don't you understand? A man is just a man, he can never be anything else. A man can't be half woman, he would be a sissy.

John. I am not a sissy, yet I feel myself complete.

Bert. But you can't be. You have got to have a woman to finish what God has made.

John. Well, a woman would soon finish me.

Bert. Now you see a woman can be both man and woman. I propose to be that. I claim that I can be a true woman and have all the character and stability of a man.

John. Then you don't intend to marry?

Bert. No, do you?

John. You say I have got to.

Bert. You have, to finish your mission in life.

John. Say, what do you know about love?

Bert. Nothing.

John. Well don't you think you are somewhat incomplete?

Bert. (*Starting.*) I hadn't thought so.

John. This love seems a very vital force.

Bert. Yes, to Harry and Annette.

John. Even Mrs. Jones seems to have tampered with it considerably.

Bert. What rot!

John. That is what I say, but it is a fact.

Bert. Ask Mrs. Voisine she knows. (*Significantly.*)

John. I believe I will. You say I've got to marry. If she's a widow, why not her. She's pretty. Harry says so. His taste is extensive and varied.

Bert. (*Shortly.*) That thing!

John. Well I've asked you and I don't get much help. You are the only woman I'd marry——

Bert. Whew, this *is* news. How long since?

John. Oh! sometime. You are the only sensible woman I ever knew.

Bert. Thank you. But you seem rather abrupt. Is it a proposal?

John. No, only a possibility.

Bert. Well—I—I—don't quite know what makes me feel so funny. I—I—believe it must be shortness of breath. And I am sure Annette would think it was cold blooded.

John. But I don't see anything so extraordinary in it. Of course it has been coming on a long time.

Bert. Oh! the symptoms! Is the disease likely to reach a crisis?

John. That's just what I can't tell.

Bert. Why it's just what Annette told me to teach you.

John. What do you mean?

Bert. It's about love.

John. I wonder if that is it. I think I'll ask Mrs. Voisine, she's a married woman and will know.

Bert. (*Scornfully.*) That woman!

John. You don't like her.

Bert. She talked love to you.

John. Well, what of it?

Bert. You flirted with her!

John. No I didn't.

Bert. You are interested in her!

John. Yes. She is a fascinating woman.

Bert. (*Angrily.*) The wretch! Perhaps she's a widow. You might marry her. She'd soon make a finish of you.

John. What nonsense. I should never think of marrying her.

Bert. Oh! just trifling with her. You don't care if she be a widow or not. If you married, you would marry me. If you loved I suppose you would love her. Oh! her being married wouldn't be any in the way.

John. Oh! please.

Bert. Yes I see now. Marriage is one thing, love is another. You take the world's view after all. Perhaps you think I am so phlegmatic that I wouldn't care. Perhaps you fancy because I am cured, yes cursed, by this thing called feminine, that with me marriage is simply a contract, just a legal document, just like buying a piece of land, you get a marriage certificate and it is merely a deed. Well you are cold blooded indeed. With your ideas I see no need of consulting Mrs. Voisine. Consult Annette, consult anybody, talk of love to them all. Yes talk love, it must be a pleasant subject. No one ever talked love to me, not even a young lawyer so very inexperienced that he had to corner a married woman in his office and begin the subject.

John. Bert, for heaven's sake!

Bert. Yes, for heaven's sake! I know I'm plain. I'm not a pretty *widow.* Pretty widow, indeed, Annette is not a widow. You don't talk love to her. Why not? She adores you. Afraid, yes, I see. And then—my God—I see, she's poor,—poor,—poor Annette. I understand John Manners. But cold blooded, why?

John. For heaven's sake hear me Bert.

Bert. I will not hear you. Go, go, to Mrs. Voisine, talk love to her. Do you hear?

John. You act just as though you were in love with me yourself.

Bert. My God do I hear right. (*Amazed.*)

John. Yes, that's the way the books talk. (*Clock strikes.*) Oh! I'm late. (*Exit.*)

Bert. (*Silent, looking around in impotent rage.*) John Manners has dared to say that to me—to me! (*Pauses, still gazing around.*) He says I act as though I were in love with him—I, in love—ha—ha—with him! Oh! my God, let me think. If any other man had said that to me, I would have struck him down. Ethelberta Donne, in love with a *man*—a *man*. This humiliation to come to me! Me, who has been so good, so steadfast a friend. Friend! Yes I will be a friend. Ha, ha, a friend. Why I feel I could throttle him with these hands. Throttle him—throttle him. (*She stares ahead.*) Oh! God—Oh! I do love him. (*Sinks on a couch and sobs.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Committee room in Convention Hall.*

TIME.—*Next day in afternoon. Enter* BERT *dressed in a very feminine manner with a distinct air of attractiveness.*

Bert. Well, such a night! (*Sinks into a chair.*) Talk about your revolutions, why I am a whole South American collapse. The insurgents won. Look at this! (*Exhibiting her frills.*) I am no longer a suffragent, I am now—why I do declare I am not even a suffragette, No (*Slowly.*) I am, Oh! perish the thought, I am just a woman. Ha! a woman! Yes, a woman, and, oh! well, out with it, just a weak woman. Such a night! I do believe I never slept a wink. And such a fright. (*Looks at herself in a pocket mirror.*) Actually, I look hideous. So pale! Oh! just a touch of color. Annette said I looked like a scared ghost. So I do, there. (*Touching her cheek with a little rouge from her bag.*) There, no one would notice that. Now, (*Looking at herself carefully.*) I do look better. I wish (*Looking around.*) they would have mirrors in woman's rights places. Blast it, I say.(*Pause.*) But what am I doing? I? I who—pah! (*Laughs.*) pah! ha—ha—ha—I—I actually am painting! I am getting to be a bedizened female. I who scorned such wretched things, tricks—mere tricks! Oh! look at me. Why am I thus? What has changed me? And he'll never notice. No, he'll just say I talk as though I'm in love with him. In love with him! In love with him, and oh! God! I am, I am. (*Sinks into chair. Enter* ANNETTE. *She looks around in a bewildered manner when she discovers* BERT *in a collapse.*)

Annette. (*After gazing at* BERT *awhile.*) Why Bert!

Bert. (*Rousing herself half dazed.*) Oh!

Annette. Whatever is the matter with you?

Bert. (*Wearily.*) Oh! I don't know.

Annette. Are you ill? Let me do something.

Bert. (*Rising.*) You can't do anything. (*Struggling.*)

Annette. Yes, dear, I can, let me see. (BERT *remembers the rouge and starts to get it, but restrains herself.*) Why Bert, Bert dear, you are going to have an attack! (BERT *sees the rouge and laughs hysterically.*)

Bert. Oh! I'm all right. I am just a little upset over things.

Annette. What things? (BERT *maneuvers to get the rouge but* ANNETTE *thwarts her, thinking she may faint.*)

Bert. Oh! things in general. (*She makes another attempt at the rouge.* ANNETTE *again tries to intercept her.*)

Annette. Now don't. Please don't. Sit down. (*Pulls out smelling salts and pushes* BERT *into a chair.*) There now just keep quiet a moment. (BERT'S *eyes search for the rouge.*) Now don't you feel better?

Bert. Yes a little. (*Makes another start.*)

Annette. Oh! Bert do sit still. (BERT *resigns herself.*) This has been a great strain on you. (BERT *jumps again, thinking* ANNETTE *has discovered her secret. They are quiet a moment during which time* BERT'S *eyes look for the rouge and* ANNETTE'S *hand goes to her heart.*) Do you think, Bert dear, John will get the vote of the convention? (BERT *starts again, and makes another movement for the rouge.*)

Bert. I don't know.

Annette. But if he shouldn't, wouldn't it be awful! You'd feel it wouldn't you? (BERT *clinches her hands feeling sure* ANNETTE *has divined her secret.*)

Bert. (*Defiantly.*) Oh! I don't know. (*Still looking at the rouge.*)

Annette. Why, Bert, what makes you look so? You aren't seeing things are you? Come now do keep quiet. Here take a little more. (*Holding up the vinaigrette.*) You see it would be so awful for John, wouldn't it dear?

Bert. What has that to do with me? (*Snappishly.*)

Annette. Oh! Bert! Don't talk that way, please don't.

Bert. (*Struggling.*) Of course I hope it will go all right——

Annette. For John's sake, of course, dear.

Bert. I don't know about John's sake. There are higher things than men.

Annette. What? (*Innocently.*)

Bert. Annette! (*Appearing shocked.*)

Annette. But if you love a man——

Bert. Love a man! Ha—ha— love a man. (*Making another attempt at the rouge.*)

Annette. Don't Bert. There's nothing on earth like loving a man. (BERT *glares.*) Don't you think so?

Bert. (*Slowly.*) Loving a man! How should I know?

Annette. (*Not heeding.*) You see, you get so wrapped up in him, so completely wrapped up in him, (*Sees* BERT's *look.*) now don't look that way, do keep quiet.

Bert. (*Gritting her teeth.*) I'm all right.

Annette. Well it just makes one down sick. (BERT *glares.* ANNETTE *looks sad.*) Really it does. (*Pauses, while* BERT's *eyes again seek the rouge.*) You see John is such a fine fellow. I'd do anything for John.

Bert. (*Sarcastically and still with further glances at the rouge.*) You are very kind. He doesn't seem to appreciate it.

Annette. Yes that is the trouble. He is just like ice.

Bert. (*Interested.*) Oh!

Annette. Just as though there wasn't a woman in the world. (*Sadly.*)

Bert. He seems to think there is now.

Annette. Oh! Bert!

Bert. Yes, for instance there seems to be Mrs. Voisine.

Annette. Mrs. Voisine! You don't think anything of her?

Bert. (*With determination.*) I don't believe John has had an affair with her, no, of course not. But how are you going to stop the old cats? (BERT *rises.* ANNETTE *jumps to prevent her.*)

Annette. Oh! do be careful Bert. What would John say if you got sick.

Bert. (*Testily.*) What do I care.

Annette. But just now. You must think of John.

Bert. Well I am thinking of John. (*Executing a flank movement and almost securing the rouge.*)

Annette. And Bert you will do all you can in the meeting. They'll all be here soon.

Bert. Yes, of course. But you seem very anxious. (*Jealously.*)

Annette. I am! Oh! Bert you don't know how I suffer.

Bert. (*Astonished and forgetting the rouge.*) Suffer, you suffer, why pray should you suffer?

Annette. Why Bert it would break my heart if the convention shouldn't uphold him. (*Moves around.* BERT *suddenly remembers the rouge but* ANNETTE *still remains between her and the rouge.*)

Bert. But they will. Besides you needn't be so awfully concerned. We are all interested.

Annette. But Bert it isn't the same to you. (BERT *starts.*)

Bert. Me, why not? (*Defiantly.*)

Annette. But I love him. I do, I do. (*Sobs.*)

Bert. (*Slowly.*) You love him,——I thought you loved Harry.

Annette. I do.

Bert. You love two men. Well that takes me. Please explain. (*Comes nearer.*) You aren't any kind of a Morman?

Annette. Yes I am. I'm a female Morman. I'm awfully sorry. You see it is like this. Harry loves me but I am poor. Harry appeals to my sentimental side and John appeals to my nobler nature. John has money.

Bert. But you can't marry them both. It's against the law.

Annette. I don't konw. Mrs. Jones did. I suppose it might be called successive polygamy.

Bert. (*Relieved.*) So you are in love with John and that is why you want him elected. I am so glad.

Annette. Glad! (*Noticing her gown for the first time.*) I, say Bert, what in the name of all the saints have you got on. (BERT *suddenly remembers the rouge and makes a dive for it but* ANNETTE *again interferes.*)

Bert. (*Trying to be calm, but still nervous.*) This! Oh! this is a new gown. How do you like it?

Annette. Why, it's fine! And how handsome you are. And your red cheeks. (BERT *jumps.*) Why you don't know

how becoming they are. I suppose its your fatigue that makes them so rosy. But really Bert do explain this change. I am simply crazy to know.

Bert. Well, if you must know. I have made a discovery.

Annette. You have? You will soon be like Miss Tattel.

Bert. No I won't. I am not so fond of discovering things. I have just found out I am a woman, and I won't sail under false colors.

Annette. And how did you find it out? (BERT *makes another attempt at the rouge but* ANNETTE *sees it and is delighted.*) Oh! you have found it out with a vengeance. Oh! Bert who would have supposed you would come to that. (*Grabs it.*) Just my kind. (*Dances with delight.*)

Bert. Now Annette please don't give me away. If you will promise—I'll—do something for you.

Annette. You will? Oh! you dear.

Bert. Yes, I'll—I'll help you with John.

Annette. It's a bargain. (*Enter* MISS EARNEST.) Oh! how do you do Miss Earnest? (BERT *grabs the rouge.*) It is such a nice day.

Miss Earnest. (*Staring at* BERT.) Yes a beautiful day to do a holy work. Miss Donne you seem to be armed for the fray. What a beautiful dress!

Bert. (*Annoyed.*) Yes it is nice, but what has it to do with the great and grand movement which reaches out to the——

Miss Earnest. Yes, that is just what I don't see.

Bert. (*Hastily.*) Well never mind the dress. We must see that John gets the endorsement of the convention.

Miss Earnest. Hum! Serve his interests by serving our own. The vast and important issues——

Bert. Require prompt and decisive action.

Miss Earnest. But I trust we can accomplish the great—— (*Enter* MISS TATTEL.)

Miss Tattel. Oh! how do you all do this afternoon? Why Miss Donne how fine you look! (BERT *shrinks.*) And such a healthy color. (ANNETTE *giggles.*) Well this nice bracing air does one good really. Even my cheeks show it. (BERT *starts and drops the rouge. Horror of* BERT *and* ANNETTE.)

Miss Earnest. (*Her eyes toward heaven.*) Accomplish the great——

Miss Tattel. Oh! dear Miss Donne, didn't you drop something? (*Looking around.*)

Bert. (*With assumed carelessness.*) No. did I?

Miss Tattel. (*Eagerly.*) Oh! yes, here it is. (BERT *makes an unsuccessful grab after it.*) There it is. (*Can't help looking.*) Oh! (*Titters.*) Why it says——

Bert. (*Savagely.*) Here I'll take it. Annette, this must be yours. (*Handing it to her.* ANNETTE *gasps.*)

Annette. (*Struggling with laughter.*) But Bert——

Bert. Here take it. (*Shakes her fist at* ANNETTE, *who calmly takes it to the intense interest of* MISS TATTEL *and* MISS EARNEST.)

Miss Tattel. Oh! I didn't understand. (*Titters.*)

Miss Earnest. (*Resuming, her hand still held out in gesture.*) Accomplish the great and good purpose——

Annette. Oh! Bert, this doesn't belong to me. (BERT *glares at* ANNETTE, *who takes her cue.*) Oh! I think perhaps Mrs. Voisine left it here yesterday.

Bert. Yes, I am sure she did. (*With relief.*)

Annette. She has such rosy cheeks! (BERT *winces.*)

Miss Earnest. Yes she seems like a bedizened female.

Annette. (*Eagerly.*) And you don't believe that about John.

Miss Earnest. I believe there is a great over-ruling power which—— (*Enter* MRS. VOISINE.)

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! how do you all do? I wanted (*Slightly embarrassed.*) to see some one. There is such a racket in the hall.

Annette. And how is it going? (*Clasping her hands.*)

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sadly.*) Oh! I don't know. They are having an awful time. Poor Mr. Manners!

Miss Tattel. Oh! Mrs. Voisine. I think perhaps you have left something here yesterday. (*Handing the rouge.*)

Mrs. Voisine. (*In horror.*) That stuff! Never. Pray what made you think so?

Miss Tattel. (*Confused.*) I—I don't know. Someone said so.

Mrs. Voisine. Then someone must have used it herself. (*Glancing at* BERT *who seems uneasy.*) You are looking very well today Miss Donne. A woman of less pronounced views on marriage might be open to suspicion.

Bert. Mrs. Voisine how dare you? (*The others make a move to go.* ANNETTE *approaches* BERT.)

Annette. Say dear do be careful. You know you are not strong. I think I will go in and see the fun.

Miss Earnest. And we too, (*To* MISS TATTEL.) must go and be on the battle-field when we hear the trumpet call.

Miss Tattel. (*Eager to get away.*) Yes we must go. And Mrs. Voisine if you are sure that (*Pointing to rouge.*) doesn't belong to you I will try and find the owner. (*Exit* ANNETTE *and the old ladies.* BERT *still glares at* MRS. VOISINE. *She smiles and takes up the rouge.*)

Bert. I would like you to explain your last remark. (*Angrily.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! it is ——'s make. (*Inspecting the rouge.*)

Bert. Is it? I hadn't noticed.

Mrs. Voisine. It is the best make, is it not?

Bert. You ought to know.

Mrs. Voisine. (*With a shrug of her shoulders.*) I, I know. I never use the stuff. Do you? (*Sweetly.*)

Bert. (*Gritting her teeth.*) Use it! But I would like you to explain your remark.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Carelessly.*) My remark!

Bert. Yes, your insulting remark.

Mrs. Voisine. (*In surprise.*) I made no insulting remark.

Bert. You said something about marriage.

Mrs. Voisine. Ha—ha, did I? Well really a handsome woman like you should not consider that an insult. That is only to be expected. Every woman thinks of it; except perhaps you. I believe they call you a suffragent.

Bert. (*Still more annoyed.*) But I am not, I am only a suffragette.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! and then you have changed. Perhaps that accounts for your fascinating costume. Would you mind telling me the name of your dressmaker.

Bert. You don't need to know. Your costume is sufficiently handsome as it is. It seems to attract the men.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Scating herself.*) Oh! do you think so?

Bert. (*Bitterly.*) Yes it is quite evident.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! you are thinking of your friend.

Bert. My friend! What do you mean?

Mrs. Voisine. (*Laughing.*) Your friend, Mr. Manners.

Bert. (*Severely.*) Well, my friend Mr. Manners.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, I really do admire him immensely.

Bert. You do?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes. He is such a fine type of a man.

Bert. He always has been.

Mrs. Voisine. He is still. At least I hope he is.

Bert. (*Savagely.*) Well you ought to know.

Mrs. Voisine. I—I know. Why should I know?

Bert. You seem to have seen most of him lately.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Laughing a little.*) Oh! have I? Yes I have seen him—some. (BERT *stares.*)

Bert. You—why you——

Mrs. Voisine. (*Serenely.*) Yes, you see it was necessary because I—well—ha, ha. I had to talk business with him.

Bert. So we have heard. Your business had to do with love.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Calmly.*) Yes. He seemed much interested in that subject.

Bert. So it seems. And you too, apparently.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! I? I am always interested in that subject.

Bert. Doesn't there ever come a time when a woman *isn't.*

Mrs. Voisine. Ah! you reflect upon my age. I am not so old.

Bert. But you seemed much interested in the subject.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, frankly I was.

Bert. (*Suddenly.*) You were?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, why not. Life is lonely enough, dreary enough without love. It cheers one up considerably.

Bert. It amuses you?

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, vastly.

Bert. Does it interest you for your own sake or for others?

Mrs. Voisine. Both. I am human, (*Coquettishly.*) very human.

Bert. So I perceive.

Mrs. Voisine. But I don't paint.

Bert. What! (*Angrily.*)

Mrs. Voisine. In spite of my complexion. (*Laughing.*) And I do like Mr. Manners. I wonder if he likes me.

Bert. But you do flirt!

Mrs. Voisine. Flirt! Now I wonder if I do. Flirt—flirt with Mr. Manners. (*Looking at* BERT *smilingly.*) And, oh! I see, you are attractive in that costume.

Bert. And tell me, woman, are you married?

Mrs. Voisine. (*Starting.*) Married, married. Why what do you mean? What has that to do with the school question? What has that to do with the great and glorious cause, the cause with a big C such as Miss Earnest talks about? Oh! I see, I see, Miss Ethelberta Donne is interested in these subjects, the dress, the——(BERT *glares.*) and Mr. Manners too. Yes, I see. (*Enter* JOHN.) Oh! why how do you do, Mr. Manners? We were just speaking of you.

John. (*Greeting* MRS. VOISINE *warmly.*) How do you do Mrs. Voisine. I am so glad to see you. (*Bowing carelessly to* BERT *and looking at her admiringly.*) How are you today Bert?

Bert. (*Dignified.*) Ethelberta, if you please.

John. Why Ethelberta?

Bert. Oh! It sounds more proper. Bert is getting too mannish for me. I'm tired of being a suffragent.

John. Surely you are not going to desert the cause now.

Bert. Oh! no, I'll stand up for you all right when they get through jawing in there.

John. (*To* MRS. VOISINE.) But you were speaking of me?

Bert. (*Sarcastically.*) Mrs. Voisine was.

Mrs. Voisine. I was speaking to Miss Donne of marriage.

John. (*Astonished.*) Marriage. I can't imagine Bert, Ethelberta being interested in that subject.

Mrs. Voisine. But she is young, she is handsome, she is a woman——

Bert. For shame. If I did think of it, it would not be in this foolish way.

John. (*Carelessly.*) But it is rather a foolish subject.

Mrs. Voisine. Ah! I trust Mr. Manners you may not always think so.

Bert. Why not. It needn't interest you.

Mrs. Voisine. And pray why not? I am a woman. (*Defiantly.*)

Bert. Oh! then you have an interest. (*Sneering.*)

Mrs. Voisine. (*Looking around, then at* JOHN, *speaking in a low voice.*) Oh! yes, that of course is foolish, (*Then laughing.*) isn't it, Mr. Manners?

John. (*Smiling.*) It does seem Mrs. Voisine that we do get on rather singular subjects. (*He gives* BERT *an admiring glance.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Certainly I am not the one to begin them.

Bert. But they seem to arise where you are.

Mrs. Voisine. You evidently think me the goddess of love. (*Laughing.*)

Bert. (*Exasperated.*) I think—well I think it is very queer.

Mrs. Voisine. Queer; why queer?

Bert. You know why it is queer.

Mrs. Voisine. But you seem to accuse me.

John. Yes, Bert——

Bert. Ethelberta, if we are to discuss love.

John. Mrs. Voisine only seems to be the victim of chance.

Bert. Chance, forsooth. And you?

John. Yes, you. This subject seems to have arisen between you. Certainly I never suggested it. It is too absurd.

Mrs. Voisine. Well, Mr. Manners you must admit that neither Miss Donne nor I am responsible, so therefore you must be.

John. Oh! this is too ridiculous.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, this is a ridiculous age. Are you quite sure you have never thought about this ridiculous thing?

John. (*Savagely.*) Yes quite sure.

Mrs. Voisine. And you Miss Donne, you too are quite free also.

Bert. I—oh! I. How can you say such things?

Mrs. Voisine. Symptoms, merely symptoms.

Bert. Oh! it's a disease.

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, and very subtle. It's worse than smallpox, for you cannot be vacinated. Yes even worse, you can have it a second time. (*Gives* JOHN *a tender look.*)

Bert. (*Angrily.*) Yes, I suppose it is a kind of intermittent fever.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sadly.*) I have found it so. (JOHN *eyes* MRS. VOISINE *curiously; she pouts.*)

John. Does it usually last long?

Mrs. Voisine. It depends on the violence of the exposure.

Bert. (*Bitterly.*) Why don't you say violence of the attack?

Mrs. Voisine. Because it is like a photographic plate. The intensity of the light (*Looking at* JOHN *tenderly.*) regulates the impression.

John. (*Flattered.*) You certainly are an adept.

Bert. Certainly Mrs. Voisine has had experience. (MISS TATTEL *enters.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Yes, you are right. And now Mr. Manners I must go and work for you. (*Exit.*)

Miss Tattel. I do hope I shall find someone who owns that rouge.

Bert. (*Startled.*) Rouge, Oh! I had forgotten.

Miss Tattel. You are sure you don't know? (*Excitedly.*)

Bert. Of course not. (*Nervously.*)

Miss Tattel. Peculiar woman, Mrs. Voisine. Very peculiar.

Bert. I should think so.

Miss Tattel. (*Eagerly.*) Kind that paints?

John. Don't say that, Miss Tattel. No respectable woman paints.

Bert. (*Drily.*) How do you know?

John. It stands to reason.

Miss Tattel. But she does look so, doesn't she Bert?

Bert. Ethelberta please.

Miss Tattel. (*Surprised.*) Oh! well I must run in. So exciting! (*Exit.*)

John. What got her going on painting?

Bert. How do I know?

John. Women don't paint unless they are bad.

Bert. Oh! I don't know. Mrs. Voisine isn't bad.

John. Who said she was.

Bert. Oh! I didn't. I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world. (*Insinuatingly.*)

John. My feelings!

Bert. I trust I am too decent to malign a man's friends to his face.

John. I should hope so.

Bert. Oh! then she is a friend?

John. Who is? (*Surprised.*)

Bert. Oh! you are hopeless. (*Gives a gesture of despair.*)

John. Hopeless! Why am I hopeless?

Bert. Oh! John can't you see? Must I tell you?

John. I am afraid you must.

Bert. Can't you see this woman is no friend of yours?

John. Friend of mine! I wouldn't call her a friend, of course not. Friends are not made in a moment.

Bert. No, nor even friendly.

John. Come now Bert, you are certainly too hard. Women are all alike, they are always down on a woman, especially if she is a stranger.

Bert. I know there is truth in what you say. But in this case you place yourself in an unpleasant position.

John. I don't see how. She tries to help me, takes an interest in education and just because she is pretty——

Bert. Oh! John what nonsense. We all know you don't care for pretty women.

John. (*Looking at her critically.*) Oh! I don't know. I am not entirely insensible to good looks.

Bert. (*Snappishly.*) It begins to look so.

John. A pretty woman, well dressed (*Gives her another look.*) is something a man is expected to admire.

Bert. (*Biting her lips.*) So it seems. (*Clinching her hands.*)

John. You don't seem to approve of it.

Bert. No, I don't. Of course I don't.

John. But I do, if the woman is worthy of it.

Bert. But she isn't. John you know she isn't.

John. No, of course not if she paints. (BERT *starts.*)

Bert. Paints! oh yes. Well she does paint.

John. (*Laughing.*) Does she? Her cheeks are red enough to be sure.

Bert. But John can't I wake you up to the seriousness of your position.

John. I am quite ready to be waked up, but I really do not think I quite understand what you are driving at.

Bert. That woman.

John. There you go back to that woman all the time.

Bert. Of course I do, there is where the danger lies.

John. I see no danger. It seems to me there is a lot of fuss made over nothing, and all because Mrs. Voisine happens to be pretty.

Bert. No John, that is not the point. That woman is trying to entrap you into something.

John. Entrap me. Ha—ha—that is good.

Bert. John you can't help see that there must be something behind all this eagerness she has to help you, that she is not a woman to take any cause seriously——

John. Bert, if it weren't you, I surely would think you were jealous of Mrs. Voisine.

Bert. Well, I might be jealous of her. I am human.

John. Jealous of a woman who paints. You—ha!

Bert. I don't know what difference that would make. There are a lot of women who paint who are nice.

John. Oh! yes nice, of course but weak.

Bert. Oh! but John all women are weak.

John. Yes I fancy you are right. But why did you put on that dress?

Bert. (*Embarassed.*) This dress? Why, don't you like it?

John. Of course I do. Do you know you are positively handsome in it?

Bert. You didn't care for my looks before.

John. Yes of course. But I didn't think about them.

Bert. (*Impatiently.*) No apparently not. I am sure I

don't wonder. I suppose you think I am weak.

John. (*Thoughtfully.*) I don't know.

Bert. Well John, I confess I am weak, awfully weak. (*Silence.*) That is why I wore this dress.

John. When you are weak then you hang out the white flag.

Bert. I think that must be about it.

John. Now old friend what has come over you?

Bert. (*Sitting down.*) I really don't know. Perhaps it is the stress of this political fight.

John. Why take it so seriously?

Bert. Why not? Why not worry when one's best friend is attacked and his character is besmirched?

John. Yes, of course dear old fellow. I know how you feel, I——

Bert. (*Somewhat seriously.*) I am not so sure.

John. Oh! yes I do. Why I have had lots of friends——

Bert. Friends yes, of course you have. But John you have never had but one woman friend. You can't understand the difference.

John. But Bert you have always been just like a man——

Bert. But I am not a man, nor a bit like one. I am just a poor weak woman. So I came out in my proper colors, that is all.

John. But you haven't told me why you think yourself only a woman.

Bert. (*Rising and walking about.*) You would never understand. You certainly are just a man, that is all.

John. Just a man, that is all.

Bert. But a fine man, a noble man, a good man.

John. A good man. Perhaps I can't help it.

Bert. You can't. Why a thing like Mrs. Voisine——

John. Don't call her a thing——

Bert. Why not, she is a thing.

John. Oh! Bert don't say that. I know I am a man, just a man. Perhaps there is something in a man, just a man, when it is just a man, that does not like to hear a woman called a thing. My mother was a woman—she was not a thing. My wife will be a woman——

Bert. Your wife!

John. Yes, my wife. I could never think of or want my wife to be called a thing. You know Bert, you have man enough in you to know it is not nice to say that of any woman. (*Silence.*)

Bert. You then think of having a wife. (*Drooping her head.*)

John. (*Innocently.*) Why of course. All men marry.

Bert. There are a few independent souls who seem to think we females are an unnecessary luxury.

John. But then you know Bert there are duties we owe the human race.

Bert. Do you mean you and me? (*Quizzically.*)

John. No, of course not, that is not now.

Bert. You seem very much impressed with your duty towards the human race. Why don't you discuss this matter with your friend, Mrs. Voisine?

John. With Mrs. Voisine!

Bert. Yes, she may be a widow.

John. Oh! Bert I wish you would drop her. You know you are the only woman I care a bit for.

Bert. (*Pleased.*) Not for Annette?

John. No, of course not. She paints.

Bert. Couldn't you ever love a woman—who—painted?

John. Certainly not. Such a hopeless weakness as that entirely precludes any thought of marriage for me.

Bert. Not if she accidentally erred—just once?

John. No, never. But drop that please and Mrs. Voisine. You know Bert what good friends we have always——

Bert. Yes I know. There is nothing a woman likes to hear so much. Why, isn't she always being just a good friend of a man? That's the way to talk, John. But don't forget the flowers. I myself don't care for flowers. I like something more substantial.

John. Yes of course. Such trivial things are useless.

Bert. Yes a great waste of money.

John. To be sure.

Bert. Don't send any to Mrs. Voisine any—more.

John. Any more!

Bert. Yes any more. Miss Tattel whispered to someone

she had heard you sent her a great bunch of American Beauties.

John. It's an awful lie.

Bert. Just what I said. Don't mind it.

John. Oh! But, you are a good friend. Don't fail me.

Bert. Yes, John, I am a friend. Yes, just the friend you want.

John. Thank you, dear old Bert. (*She starts.*)

Bert. Yes—and—John, we'll let the human race take care of itself. (*Enter* MRS. VOISINE.)

John. (*Puzzled.*) I am not so sure about that.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! Mr. Manners, I though you were alone.

Bert. (*Hastily.*) He is. You wish to speak to him of course. I quite understand. He wants to speak to you. It's—it's about the human race.

Mrs. Voisine. About the human race!

Bert. Yes, he is deeply interested in it.

Mrs. Voisine. He is, well so am I. (*Puzzled.*)

Bert. Ahem! I thought so. (*Exit.*)

Mrs. Voisine. I fear Mr. Manners, I am very much in the dark as to Miss Donne's meaning.

John. So am I. She seems very queer. I don't understand her. She didn't used to be this way.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sweetly.*) Perhaps I can make it clear to you.

John. You? Why what do you know about her?

Mrs. Voisine. Only what one woman knows of another.

John. You don't like her.

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! yes I do. I admire her so much. She is so manly. I don't wonder they call her a suffragent.

John. But that is nonsense.

Mrs. Voisine. I only wish she liked me as much as I do her.

John. Who said she didn't like you.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sadly.*) No one. It is only too evident. But then I can stand that. I am accustomed to being disliked. It seems to be some people's lot.

John. Do you think so?

Mrs. Voisine. Think so! I know so. That dreadful Miss

Tattel tells all sorts of lies about me.

John. That I sent you roses.

Mrs. Voisine. But you never did.

John. That is what I said. I never thought of such a thing.

Mrs. Voisine. No, of course not. Why should you? (*With a bewitching smile.*)

John. I never indulge in such frivolities. (*His eyes fall on the rose on her dress.*) Someone I see has been frivolous.

Mrs. Voisine. This, oh! this. (*She sighs.*) You are not one to know all things. You sneer at women.

John. Oh! no I don't. I see you have some sentiment.

Mrs. Voisine. I am a woman.

John. Some man gave you that.

Mrs. Voisine. Some man? Perhaps. (*Coquettishly.*) But then no one really likes me. It is so hard to find anyone who can understand one. It is always this horrible distrust, this utter loneliness that a woman feels.

John. Is it so? I thought women seemed happy.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sadly.*) They are not happy. They are not. And (*Energetically.*) why are they not happy? Because they are distrusted. Just when they feel that there may be someone who can understand and appreciate them, oh! then, then comes that distrust, that bitter venum——

John. (*Interested.*) Oh! don't take it so to heart. There are many true people in the world——

Mrs. Voisine. Perhaps, but I don't seem to meet them——

John. Believe me now—there are.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Toying with her handkerchief.*) Do you think so? Oh! but you have not suffered. You are young, enthusiastic, brave, kind—oh! you are—oh! if I could have met you before—could have had a real chance in the world—not been so handled by fate, miserable fate—oh! then I, too, could have been happy. No, you and I just meet in this world —just meet—in this world and pass on. (*Smiling rather sadly.*) This is of course of no interest to you. And it is very silly——

John. (*Eagerly.*) No, don't say that. I am always sorry for people in distress. (*Goes to her.*)

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! you are so kind. (*Just touches her handkerchief to her eyes.*) Of course you mean well, but you know you are really only a boy, and I mustn't let my misfortunes dim your life.

John. They won't I am sure. You are trying to help me in my election and it is a small matter for me to give you my sympathy in your trouble.

Mrs. Voisine. But they are so vindictive. Just think of them saying you sent me roses. What will they say next?

John. It does not matter what they say. We will face the meannesses of the world with a determined front. (*Enter* HARRY *who starts as he sees* MRS. VOISINE *give* JOHN *her hand with a grateful look.*)

Harry. Oh! John, I have tried so hard to find you.

John. You have. What for?

Harry. (*Hesitating.*) I have just learned some unfortunate news. (*Looking at* MRS. VOISINE.)

Mrs. Voisine. Is it about the election?

Harry. I am afraid it is.

John. You are afraid.

Harry. Yes.

John. Why are you afraid? Tell us quick.

Harry. Perhaps Mrs. Voisine would not like to hear.

Mrs. Voisine. I? Why not. (*Showing anxiety.*)

Harry. (*Coldly.*) Because you are concerned in it.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sweetly.*) I confess I am deeply. The school question is one——

Harry. Yes I know. But there is another just now on the carpet of much greater importance.

John. What is it, what do you mean, Harry?

Harry. I mean that your reputation is at stake and I have found out all the details.

Mrs. Voisine. All the details, quite *all?*

Harry. Yes, all. (*Silence.* MRS. VOISINE *a little defiant.*)

John. Harry please go on. You seem very mysterious.

Harry. Does Mrs. Voisine desire me to tell *all* the details?

Mrs. Voisine. (*With affected surprise.*) Certainly.

Harry. Well John you were told your reputation was as-

sailed, that it was in danger from a woman, and there stands the woman.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Savagely.*) I, the woman? You are beside yourself.

Harry. (*Coldly.*) I know.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Laughing a little.*) You hear Mr. Manners. You hear. It is just as I told you.

John. Don't mind this. Tell me Harry what you know. You have no right to attack a woman like this.

Mrs. Voisine. No, leave such attacks to my own sex. From men I look for kinder treatment.

Harry. Yes, and get it. (*With a sneer.*)

John. Harry you must explain. I will not have you treat this lady in this rude manner.

Harry. Oh! John you are just a new born baby. This woman has made a dead set for you——

Mrs. Voisine. Can I believe my ears?

Harry. She has sought to compromise you——

Mrs. Voisine. Is it possible he can be a man? (*To* JOHN?)

John. Harry, I can't have this.

Harry. I know and I know for certain. I have proofs.

Mrs. Voisine. (*Sweetly.*) And they are?

Harry. These. (*Showing papers.*)

Mrs. Voisine. (*Mockingly.*) These, and pray what are *these.*

Harry. Police records.

Mrs. Voisine and John. Police records!

Harry. Yes, the chief of police kindly loaned them to me. Shall I read them?

Mrs. Voisine. The chief loaned them—loaned them.

John. Mrs. Voisine, can you explain?

Mrs. Voisine. (*Recovering herself with difficulty.*) Explain, why I know nothing about it. I told you I was the victim of some terrible mistake—you know how those women have talked. I have tried simply to do my duty, and if, Mr. Manners, just because I have tried to do my duty, tried to carry forward a project that has always appealed to my deepest feelings, tried in doing so to assist you——

Harry. You have sought to hinder. The chief is a friend

of mine. He isn't in politics and he knew—well he knew you were the friend of the boss.

Mrs. Voisine. It is false, false and you know it.

Harry. It is true. You came here at the invitation of the boss. You are paid by him, you are—well you are a *friend* of his.

Mrs. Voisine. And what if I am. Surely he can have friends.

Harry. Yes, but not such friends as you.

Mrs. Voisine. Me, why not me?

Harry. You forget the police records I have in my hands.

Mrs. Voisine. It is all a contemptible lie—lie—lie.

John. Give them to me Harry. (*Takes them.*) What arrested—what sentenced—oh! Harry it must be a mistake. A description—oh! Why it answers. Mrs. Voisine tell me, is it true? I see it is true. You have tried to win me over to some hellish thing. You! (BERT *enters.*) You have played your part. Woman tell me why did you do it? Why did you try to ruin what every man holds dear? I had not wronged you, I had not injured you. I was sorry for you when you said you were misjudged——

Mrs. Voisine. (*Quietly.*) Then you believe it?

John. Why shouldn't I believe it?

Mrs. Voisine. Oh! well the game is up. Yes if you wish to know I am all it says. It doesn't matter to me. One must live. I am not rich like Miss Donne. (*Taking up the rouge.*) I do wonder if Miss Tattel has found the owner of this. You have a very beautiful complexion, Miss Donne. Perhaps you may yet take an interest in the human race. Good-bye Mr. Manners. You have not yet perceived that Miss Donne is in love with you. Better make sure. I like you Mr. Manners, you are a man. Good-bye. (*Exit.*)

Harry. Well she is a cool one. (*Exit.*)

John. Oh! Bert is it true?

Bert. (*Rousing herself.*) Is what true?

John. What she said? (*Eagerly.*)

Bert. (*In haste.*) I should think you might judge. From such a source!

John. But oh! Bert tell me.

Bert. Tell you! I must go into the hall. (*Tries to get away.*)

John. Oh wait, please wait. (*She goes out laughing. The noise and confusion in the hall increases.*) Can that woman be right? Is it possible that she loves me? Me—why I do believe, I know now, yes it is true. I do love her—oh! What a fool I've been. Bert, Bert, my darling, my darling—(*Enter* BERT *with her hat on crooked.*)

Bert. Oh! John, John, we've won, we've won. They'll all vote for you old fellow—Hurrah! Hurrah!

John. Oh! Bert what do I care about this. Oh! Bert do you know I love you, I love you.

Bert. Oh! why didn't you say so before?

John. I didn't know, sweetheart.

Bert. Oh! my, how slow you men are.

John. But Bert you haven't told me you love me.

Bert. Oh! haven't I? I forgot. But that doesn't matter. You think I'd make you a good wife, and then, well, I think you'd make a good husband and all the requirements of civilization will be satisfied. That is all, isn't it?

John. No, but that woman said you loved me.

Bert. Then she must know. But you know you can never marry a woman who paints.

John. No, but what has that to do with it?

Bert. Well just this. That is mine. (*Taking up rouge.*)

John. Yours?

Bert. Yes mine. If you really love me I will tell you about it.

John. I do.

Bert. Well last night I found out I was, oh! John, I was a woman. And I suffered and suffered. This morning I was so pale—and John, dear, I did so want to have you love me. (*He takes her in his arms.*) And I put on my best dress for you darling, and oh! I was so miserable—and oh! John, can't you marry a woman who paints? Oh! please do.

John. My darling, I can. (*Enter in great confusion the people from the convention, their hats on crooked and with a general disheveled appearance. They stop in amazement while* MISS EARNEST *starts forward.*)

Miss Tattel. Oh! do tell us what has happened, I am so anxious to know.

John. (*Recovering himself and taking* BERT'S *hand.*) I have the pleasure of announcing, ladies, that Miss Donne has consented to become my wife.

Miss Earnest. Really I should like to know what all this kind of conduct has to do with women's rights?

Bert. (*Turning.*) Well if getting a man isn't a woman's right I would like to know what is!

CURTAIN.